



The Power of Gifts

Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England

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Acknowledgements

Half a lifetime ago, or so it seems, I finished a book on hospitality in early modern England. In the late stages of research and writing for that volume it became increasingly clear that hospitality was only a limited aspect of a broader theme in social and political relations—the role of the gift. Anthropologists, who provided much of the theoretical stimulus for my work, certainly regarded the two as inseparable, and the gift as central to understanding pre-modern societies. And so it seemed appropriate to move forward from hospitality to study gift-exchange, after various other research obligations had been discharged. In the long time before I was able to begin serious work on the subject, the historiography of the gift expanded rapidly. Most relevant for my period was Natalie Zemon Davis's *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, which has already acquired the status of a classic text. In the last ten years, with many interruptions, I have kept my vow, and have researched gift-exchange and power in English society during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It has been an intriguing quest: one which has thrown light on socio-political behaviour, and on the use of benefits and reciprocity in the exercise of royal power.

Retirement from the demands of an academic post has finally enabled me to bring the project to fruition. I owe many debts for academic help, debate, and encouragement along the way, not least to the history editors of Oxford University Press in their patient wait for the book's conclusion. Cathryn Steele as current editor, Angela Anstey-Holroyd, Elizabeth Stone and Deepthi Vasudevan have all been very helpful during its final production. Aspects of my work have been presented at numerous seminars over the years, and I am particularly grateful to discussants in London, Oxford, and Durham. In recent times the session at the major Henry VIII conference at Hampton Court in 2009, and the colloquium of the Society of Court Studies at Knole in 2012, offered particular stimulus.

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Felicity Heal
February, 2014

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Abbreviations

APC	Acts of the Privy Council
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
BL	British Library
<i>CSPD</i>	<i>Calendar of State Papers Domestic</i>
<i>CSP For</i>	<i>For Calendar of State Papers Foreign</i>
<i>CSP Sc</i>	<i>Calendar of State Papers Scotland</i>
<i>CSP Sp</i>	<i>Calendar of State Papers Spanish</i>
<i>CSP Ven</i>	<i>Calendar of State Papers Venetian</i>
<i>EETS</i>	<i>Early English Text Society</i>
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
FSL	Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC
HRO	Hampshire Record Office
HHL	Henry Huntington Library, San Marino, CA
<i>HJ</i>	<i>Historical Journal</i>
HMC	<i>Historical Manuscripts Commission</i>
<i>HoP</i>	<i>History of Parliament</i>
<i>JBS</i>	<i>Journal of British Studies</i>
<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>LP</i>	<i>Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII</i>
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
NLW	National Library of Wales
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
<i>PP</i>	<i>Past and Present</i>
<i>REED</i>	<i>Records of Early English Drama</i>
SHC	Surrey History Centre
<i>TRHS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
TNA	The National Archives

PART I

SOCIETY AND ITS GIFTS

1

What Is a Gift?

WHY GIFTS?

George Gascoigne's play of welcome was performed at Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester's, great entertainment of Elizabeth at Kenilworth in 1575. In it a savage man, representing the untamed force of nature, engages in a dialogue with Eccho. The burden of their exchange is praise of Dudley's hospitality, ending with a none-too-subtle hint that he remained available to marry the queen. It is this last point that has intrigued commentators, but the passage also offers a remarkable insight into contemporary understanding of the nature of gifts:

Savage man:	Gifts? what? Sent from the Gods? as presents from above? Or pleasures of provision as tokens of true love?	Gifts
Eccho:		True love
Savage man:	And who gave all those gifts? I pray thee (Eccho) say? Was it not he? who (but of late) this building here did lay?	
Eccho:		Dudley
Savage man:	O Dudley, so me thought; He gave him selfe and all, A worthy gift to be received, and so I trust it shall.	
Eccho:		It shall. ¹

Gifts are first represented as showered from above, divine generosity displayed to man. In practice, however, these gifts in this entertainment are revealed as the product of earthly relationships, the largesse of the earl lavished upon his queen

¹ 'The Princely Pleasures', in John Nichols's, *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth I*, ed. Elizabeth Goldring et al., 5 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), ii, 301. The Kenilworth festivities are discussed in Elizabeth Goldring, 'Portraiture, patronage and the progresses: Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, and the Kenilworth festivities of 1575', in Jayne Elisabeth Archer, Elizabeth Goldring, and Sarah Knight (eds.), *The Progresses, Pageants and Entertainments of Queen Elizabeth I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 163–88.

and guest. The offerings are public and highly visible—entertainment in fine buildings—but also intimately personal. It is a bold move for the savage poetically to transfer Dudley's giving of things imbued with his spirit of generosity, to the giving of himself. And the gift demands a worthy response from the queen: explicitly that of gratitude, but implicitly that of offering herself to Dudley. The persistent Eccho reinforces the sense of coercion that underlies the generosity of the language.² The Gascoigne text reveals Leicester's continuing desire to marry the queen, and no doubt his awareness that there was no better moment to press his suit once more than these lavish celebrations. So its fascination lies in its audacity. The language of gifting and generosity, it claims, permitted a mere subject to hint at marriage to a queen.³

The earl's greeting to the queen performs one of the key assumptions underpinning gift-exchange in early modern England. The generosity of the offering, its superfluity of welcome, and its rhetoric of service, both focus on the mutuality of the political relationship and the hierarchy that it apparently upholds. Meanwhile, the obligation that the gift constructs, is (or so Leicester hoped) an inescapable debt to be paid by the sovereign recipient. The consideration of the significance of the savage man's song shows that there is much to be gained by studying a society through its gifting practices. Gifts serve to enhance bonds between individuals and families, to express loyalty and deference, to display charity, and to demonstrate power. It is possible to explore what men value, both economically and morally, through an examination of what they choose to give, and how they make their offerings.

Once, and that not so very long ago, it was assumed that gift-exchange could be left largely to the anthropologists, studying how transaction occurred in primitive or, to quote Marcel Mauss, 'archaic' societies. Then the techniques of analysis developed in these contexts were applied fruitfully to small-scale groups and entities within complex cultures.⁴ Economists became intrigued by the boundary between the gift and the market, and literary scholars by gift-exchange in rhetoric and patronage practice.⁵ Among historians it has been those studying the ancient

² The entertainment is also discussed in Louis A. Montrose, 'Gifts and Reasons: the Contexts of Peele's *Araygnment of Paris*', *English Literary History* 47 (1980), 450.

³ On the boldness of the language used by Gascoigne see Helen Cooper, 'Location and Meaning in Masque, Morality and Royal Entertainment', in David Lindley (ed.), *The Court Masque* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 141–3.

⁴ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967). A good guide to how anthropologists have responded to Mauss's seminal work is: Wendy James and N. J. Allen (eds.), *Marcel Mauss: a Centenary Tribute* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1998). See also Harry Liebersohn, *The Return of the Gift: European History of a Global Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), esp. 139–63.

⁵ Two important collections that assemble contributors from a range of the social sciences are Mark Osteen (ed.), *The Question of the Gift: Essays across Disciplines* (London: Routledge, 2002) and Aafke E. Komter (ed.), *The Gift: an Interdisciplinary Perspective* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996). There are a number of significant literary studies, notably Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (New York: Random House, 1983). Of particular relevance for English society in the early modern period is Alison V. Scott, *Selfish Gifts: the Politics of Exchange and English Courtly Literature, 1580–1628* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006).

and medieval worlds who have derived richest benefit from applying anthropological theories of the gift to their periods, with particularly exciting work being done on the relationship between the Church and secular society.⁶ Early modern historians have come rather belatedly to this feast, but now recognize that, especially in pre-industrial societies, forms of the gift economy are of great significance.⁷ Cultures in which personal bonds of patronage, affinity, and deference were central to political identity, and beneficence and informal support was largely maintained through networks of kinship, neighbourliness, and group identity, have proved particularly amenable to study through the mechanism of gift-exchange. For the early modern period the work of Natalie Zemon Davis, on France, is distinguished by its imaginative range and clear focus on gifting practices.⁸ The English evidence has been partially explored, most recently in a major study of informal gift networks by Ilana Ben-Amos.⁹ Through this work we now understand more fully how mechanisms of support and social exchange operated in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century society.¹⁰ Less has been done about the political role of gifts in English culture since Linda Levy Peck's seminal studies of corruption.¹¹ It scarcely requires the invocation of the familiar

⁶ Moses A. Finley, *The World of Odysseus*, (London: Penguin, 1962); I. Morris, 'Gift and Commodity in Archaic Greece', *Man*, ns 21 (1987), 1–17; Sitta von Reden, *Exchange in Ancient Greece* (London, Duckworth, 1995); B. Rosenheim, *To be a Neighbour of St Peter: the Social Meaning of Cluny's Property, 909-1049* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989); Megan McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints: Prayer for the Dead in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (eds.), *The Languages of Gift in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), esp. Chris Wickham, 'Conclusion', 238–61; for a valuable overview of work by medieval historians on this topic see Arnoud-Jan A. Bijsterveld, 'The Medieval Gift as an Agent of Social Bonding and Political Power: A Comparative Approach' in Esther Cohen and Mayke B. De Jong (eds.), *Medieval Transformations: Texts, Power and Gifts in Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 123–56.

⁷ See for example Valentin Groebner, *Liquid Assets, Dangerous Gifts: Presents and Politics at the End of the Middle Ages*, trans. Pamela E. Selwyn (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); G. F. Little and Steven Orgel (eds.), *Patronage in the Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981); Sharon Kettering, 'Gift-giving and Patronage in Early Modern France', *French History* 2 (1988), 131–51; Suzanne B. Butters, 'The Uses and Abuses of Gifts in the World of Ferdinando de' Medici', *I Tatti Studies: Essays in the Renaissance* 11 (2007), 243–354.

⁸ Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁹ Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving: Informal Support and Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). See also Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: the Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1998).

¹⁰ See also L. Zionkowski and C. Klekar (eds.), *The Culture of the Gift in Eighteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009). Both Ben-Amos and these eighteenth-century essays warn against any simple concept of the early modern period as a gateway to modernity with the triumph of the market.

¹¹ Linda Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England* (London: Routledge, 1990); Linda Levy Peck, 'Benefits, Brokers and Beneficiaries: the Culture of Exchange in Seventeenth-Century England', in Bonnelyn Y. Kunze and Dwight D. Brautigam (eds.), *Court, Country and Culture: Essays in Early Modern British History in Honor of Perez Zagorin* (Rochester, NY: Rochester University Press, 1992), 109–28. The most insightful exception is David Wootton's essay on Francis Bacon and friendship, which focuses on an issue of great relevance to this volume—the relationship between gift-giving as friendship and gift-giving as patronage: David Wootton, 'Francis Bacon: Your Flexible Friend', in John H. Elliott and Laurence Brockliss (eds.), *The World of the Favourite* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 184–204.

trio of Renaissance, Reformation, and Civil War to assert that this was a critically challenging phase of English history, one in which social relationships and power structures were placed under immense strain. It is the purpose of this volume to consider the nature and meaning of gifts in this culture, and then to apply that understanding to the study of the exercise of power between the early years of the Tudor regime and the Restoration period.

THEORIES ABOUT GIFTS

There is no simple or unitary answer to the question—what is a gift?—but since the problem is one that anthropologists have made their own it may be helpful at least to think of the important issues with their assistance. The fascination with gift-relationships, originating from the work of Malinowski and Mauss, has continued to generate lively intellectual discussion in this and related disciplines. Almost a century of debate among the anthropologists about the nature of the gift has produced no agreement on universally applicable tests of its significance. However, it has opened a magnificent treasure chest of concepts that can, with care, become hypotheses against which specific historical data can be tested.

There are several approaches to the gift and gift-exchange that may prove fruitful for our purposes. The first is derived from Marcel Mauss's great study *The Gift*, and focuses upon the spirit of the gift, or, to use a modern reformulation, the spirit which is conveyed by the gift.¹² Mauss saw societies in which gift-exchange was significant as using this form of exchange to satisfy material needs, but also using the concept of the gift to moral ends, to fructify transactions and to create and strengthen social bonds. The spirit of the gift had to be, or appear to be, disinterested and free, though in fact it was part of a three-fold obligation: to give, to receive, and to repay. In archaic societies Mauss saw the potlatch as crucial evidence of this cycle of giving, for, as he remarks of the final stage of repayment: 'the obligation of worthy return is imperative. Face is lost forever if it is not made...'.¹³ The moral power of the gift both strengthened and constrained early societies, though Mauss himself clearly identified it as a force for good, lamenting the loss of social cohesion in the modern world. His circulation of gifts has since often been paralleled with the image of the Three Graces.¹⁴

The gift, for Mauss, was always opposed to the commodity; the latter constructing no social bond. Later interpretations of the relationship between the two forms of exchange have varied markedly. C. A. Gregory, for example, sharpens the contrast. Gifts presuppose the interdependence of parties to a transaction and the possible inalienability of the thing exchanged: commodity exchange presupposes

¹² The rephrasing is Mark Osteen's in his introduction to *The Question of the Gift*, 3.

¹³ Mauss, *The Gift*, 41.

¹⁴ Davis, *The Gift*, 18–21. Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: How the Creative Spirit Transforms the World* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2006), does not use the image of the Graces, but derives his argument on circulation essentially from the Maussian idea of the spirit of the gift.

the independence of those engaged in transactions and the ready alienability of the commodity.¹⁵ Such an inflexible boundary does not command much current support, for it indicates too rigid a categorization of the thing called gift. The boundaries between gift and sale, it is argued, are often blurred both rhetorically and substantively. So, for example, systems in which loans and credit are patterned through personal connection, or in which fees are paid for services that can be articulated as gifts, bring supposedly antithetical forms of social behaviour into close conjunction. Money, which appears the key signifier of impersonal, market-based exchange, can be transmuted into gift-commodity by circumstance.¹⁶ And more generally the notion that gift- and commodity-exchange are in two wholly separate registers because one conforms to rational economic calculation while the other articulates social bonding, seems unconvincing.¹⁷ Language and behaviour, like things, migrate between gift and market according to the needs of the participants to transactions. Gifts may be assigned clear market values: commodities traded within a rhetorical presentation of generosity and social identity.

However, Mauss and Gregory both offer important reflections on the attitudes of agents in any transaction. Helmuth Berking follows Gregory, but explains more clearly how gift-exchange can be differentiated from commodity transaction by process. In emphasizing the relational significance of giving—‘if brothers make gifts, then gifts make brothers’—Berking identifies four elements in transactions: there is the object exchanged; the sequence of giving and taking; the understanding of actors and their motives; and finally the rule or norms governing the behaviour observed.¹⁸ All these elements should in some measure be present when an exchange is removed from the sphere of commodity.

A second approach is particularly identified with Pierre Bourdieu. In gift-exchange, says Bourdieu, there has to be a ‘collectively maintained and approved self-deception without which symbolic exchange, a fake circulation of fake use, could not operate’.¹⁹ The gift has to conceal self-interest within an envelope that ‘mystifies’ its efficacy for the participants in the exchange. This is not to deny the importance of the transaction: properly conducted with the affirmation of approved and accepted symbols, with the return gift delayed, it can possess great affective power. This approach, which subordinates any idea of essential meaning to the expressive behaviour surrounding the gift, has a particular attraction when

¹⁵ C. A. Gregory, *Gifts and Commodities* (London: Academic Press Inc., 1982), 71–101, summarized at 100–1.

¹⁶ Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry, *Money and the Morality of Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 8–10.

¹⁷ Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), in his introduction at 11–13, points out that Bourdieu’s arguments against Mauss have been highly influential here. Above all Bourdieu challenges the assumptions about the possibility of disinterested exchange that underpin Mauss’s analysis.

¹⁸ Helmuth Berking, *A Sociology of Giving*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London: Sage, 1999); See also the approving commentary on Berking in Osteen *Question of the Gift*, 10–12.

¹⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 6. It can also be located in the work of other symbolist anthropologists such as Eleanor Goody.

studying élites in early modern Europe, with their intense concentration upon gesture and form. Literary scholars are particularly likely to be persuaded by this relationship of symbolic gesture to forms of concealment embedded in gift-exchange. For example, Bowditch, discussing Augustan Rome, stresses the degree to which the rhetoric of epideictic writing was a means of putting symbolic capital into circulation between authors and their patrons.²⁰ And for Louis Montrose the act of giving, rather than its content, is the crucial feature of exchange, and the end of the transaction, for a cultured Elizabethan at least, is the affirmation of civility.²¹

Bourdieu also contributes to a theme emphasized in much current social science literature: the idea that the meaning of an exchange inheres in the moment of its transaction and that the parties giving and receiving are involved in the construction of contingent meaning. The players, he says, have to have the skills of improvisers in a set of exchanges where particular circumstances determine outcomes.²² Historians such as Gadi Algazi have been influenced by this concept of the fluidity of gift registers, arguing that precision in understanding the context of exchanges, added to the belief that transactions need specific negotiation, is vital.²³ In this they follow the road away from essentialist definitions of the gift. The difficulty with this position is that it easily loses any focus on social norms, making gifts mere modelling devices to be manipulated according to the interests of individual players. Anthropologists such as Marilyn Strathern and Annette Weiner resist this extreme subjectivity, seeking to identify some stability within gift-cultures—a stability Weiner associates with the protection of inalienable goods and Strathern with the dominance of social groups who can determine ‘connections and disconnections created by the circulation of objects’.²⁴ Natalie Zemon Davis seeks to combine these different approaches, in her pursuit of an ethnography of gifting in sixteenth-century France. The need for some fixity of meaning leads to her definition of the ‘gift mode’ or ‘register’, reference points for contemporaries thinking about giving, while she studies the process of negotiation, and the contingent behaviour of actors, as a central theme of the book.

The linguistic turn has also encouraged a preoccupation with contingency. Literary specialists and historians have long acknowledged the importance of understanding words in their context, and have pursued what Chris Wickham calls ‘giftly’ words as a way of grasping the intentions of historical actors.²⁵ Particularly close attention has been paid to the terminology surrounding dangerous gifts, those which might readily go wrong—such as gratuities, douceurs, and bribes.²⁶ So the semantics of

²⁰ Phebe Lowell Bowditch, *Horace and the Gift Economy of Patronage* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 5–6.

²¹ Montrose, ‘Gifts and Reasons’, 453.

²² Bourdieu, *Theory of Practice*, 8.

²³ Gadi Algazi, ‘Introduction’, in Gadi Algazi, Valentin Groebner, and Bernhard Jussen (eds.), *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-modern Figurations of Exchange* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003).

²⁴ Annette Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: the Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992); Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988).

²⁵ Wickham, ‘Conclusion’, *The Languages of Gift*, 242–7.

²⁶ Peck, *Court Patronage*, 185–207; Davis, *The Gift*, 147–50; Kettering, ‘Gift-Giving and Patronage’, 134–41.

gift-giving seem a potentially valuable way of approaching a difficult historical terrain. And indeed they are, since we need constantly to be alerted to the belief of at least some of the relevant observers that a particular behaviour is to be labelled within the gift register. But words are subject to negotiation and calculation by their speakers: they are unlikely to offer fixed meaning or point to certain outcome. The most significant study of the practice of gifting in late medieval towns, for example, focuses on the ambiguities of linguistic descriptors, invoking the paradoxical idea of liquid assets, words, and things that defy attempts to establish stability.²⁷

This stress upon contingent and negotiated behaviour usually focuses upon the actors rather than the thing upon which they act: the object of exchange. But one of the most influential interpretations to emerge from the theoretical literature returns us firmly to the gift itself. Igor Kopytoff argued that material entities should be understood as having their own biography. Their meaning is no more fixed than that of the actions of actors to exchange, and they may move from being part of general commoditized identity to the singularity of the gift at any point in that history. He acknowledges, like Davis, that the specific identity of things may be more or less determined by social agreement—gold cups are more likely to be part of the gift register than sacks of potatoes—but there is no necessary agreement about the precise circumstance or moment of the movement from general commodity to singular offering.²⁸ In some ways this analysis provides the most explicit answer to the question of this chapter: a gift, says Kopytoff, is a ‘thing’, usually of a material kind, which the transacting partners are willing to define as separate from the general process of commodity-exchange. The attribution of singularity and value may well be established by the giver, but the recipient has to participate in the transaction, both parties bringing to the exchange a consciousness of the norms of gifting in that culture. Context will determine whether the offering is judged good or bad, within a value-based frame of reference.

So, though there is only limited agreement among theorists of the gift, there are some useful parameters to apply to the historical evidence. There is a process in giving, rather than simply a movement of things; there may be some affective relationship between the actors, which is expressed through the gift; this relationship may continue through more than one transaction; the normative values of a society play some part in defining the gift; in the end contingent negotiation is likely to determine the precise nature of the donation. And, finally, there is usually a material thing, or benefit, that the actors have agreed will be separated from regular exchange and given a biographical label as gift. The list is certainly not exhaustive, nor the one always perceived by early modern observers, but it does alert us to ways of looking at transactions and cultural behaviour.

²⁷ Groebner, *Liquid Assets*, esp. 71–89.

²⁸ Igor Kopytoff, ‘The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process’, in Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things*, 64–94.

EARLY MODERN PERCEPTIONS OF GIFTS

Theories such as those considered above are 'good to think'. However this is an historian's book, and its objective is to be specific about gift-exchange in time and space. Giving, receiving, and passing on benefits involved a repertoire of actions that do not necessarily leave an extensive deposit in the historical record. The meanings that these gestures held for contemporaries often remained implicit and unexplored. Writing gifts, documenting and itemizing them, was a rather distinctive exercise in control.²⁹ It brought the vigilance of the accountant, and indeed some of the mechanisms otherwise employed for the exchanges of the market, into the gift register. Much of the evidence for the process of giving and receiving on which the present study is built depends upon such recording practices: the exchanges of New Year's gifts, the offerings of towns and cities to the great and good, the use of princely largesse to reward ambassadors and other foreigners of note. Royal officials, estate stewards, and town chamberlains all contributed to gift bookkeeping, often, though not always, as an integral part of their other recording practices. All of this provides invaluable evidence of the thing that is exchanged, the materiality of the gift, and of the donors and recipients: inevitably it leaves unexplored motives and assumptions about the significance of the exchange. On the other hand, less formal records of transactions and gestures, from correspondence, descriptions etc. may afford momentary insight into the concerns of the participating parties without contextualizing these in a way that allows the historian to evaluate their broader significance.

The obvious recourse for the historian seeking to disentangle contemporary values is to look at the manner in which they are articulated in literary sources. If parties to gift-exchange were often silent about their motives, the 'chattering classes' of early modern England were only too willing to fill the lacunae. It was the duty of preachers and moralists to be prescriptive, to cast contemporary behaviour in unfavourable light, and to set alternative standards. The motives with which people gave and received gifts—behaviour usually caught between altruism and self-interest—were grist to the reformers' mill. However, the language of giving was not dominated exclusively by this moralizing discourse. A more realistic set of sentiments emerge in sources such as advice literature, concerned as they are with proper action than with the attribution of motives. Then there are maxims and proverbs, sometimes a timeless reflection of social practice, but more often evidence of the particular values and concerns of their own culture.³⁰

²⁹ Groebner, *Liquid Assets*, 15–22. Basel kept separate gift-account books, thereby signalling the significance of this aspect of municipal activity. Such separation of gifts from other records is unusual in an English context. It only occurs systematically in the recording of royal New Year giving and receiving. A few household accounts kept a separate gift register, and Thomas Egerton's accountant kept a book of his New Year's gifts.

³⁰ Frank Percy Wilson, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3rd edn. 1970), introduction. For a reflection on the importance of proverbs in revealing specific cultural and political assumptions see Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: the Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 101–4.

English proverbs, as one might expect, spoke both to the virtues and dangers of gifts. The circulation of benefits, given and taken, was a common theme: 'one favour begets another'; 'to a grateful man give money when he asks'; or more cynically 'you shall have as good as you bring'.³¹ A warmer version of the same concern for proper forms of giving can be found in the fifteenth-century advice of Peter Idley to his son, based on translation of the thirteenth-century work of Albert of Brescia:

And yet gentilnes and curtesie wolde
If love shold be hadde in contynauce
To geve ageyn and not to withholde
This wold be called to Remembraunce;
For who with love woll make aliaunce,
He must nedis yelde gyfte for gyfte,
And thenne is frendship evenly shifte.³²

Do as you would be done by is a regular and predictable part of the repertoire of advice. Here is Hugh Rhodes, another fifteenth-century source, advising on relationships:

Of whomsoever thou receyvest,
Give somewhat, friend, agayne,
For empty fystes, men use to say,
Cannot the Hawke retayne.³³

Proverbs also point to a concern to persuade individuals beyond this instrumentalist view of giving, by stressing the divine favour that derived from generosity. 'Giving much to the poor does increase a man's store'; 'to a good spender God is the treasurer' are among the many sentiments of this kind first recorded by George Herbert in his extensive list of *Outlandish Proverbs*.³⁴

The importance of the spirit in which giving occurred, even if the Deity is only an implicit judge of the transaction, is the subject of a regularly cited proverb, beginning with Erasmus, 'a gift is more valued by the mind of the giver', and expressed most eloquently in *Hamlet*, 'rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind'.³⁵ These last examples, however, need to be treated with some caution as evidence of general attitudes since they all derive from moralizing classical sources. Simpler versions of

³¹ Morris Palmer Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan University Press, 1950)—all the initial quotations are drawn from this source. Davis identifies the first of these quotations as common in France as well: Davis, *The Gift*, 20.

³² *Peter Idley's Instructions to his Son*, ed. Charlotte D'Evelyn (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 100.

³³ Hugh Rhodes, 'The Boke of Nurture', in ed. Frederick J. Furnivall, *Manners and Meals in Olden Times* (EETS, os 32, 1888), 102. Rhodes is reusing a proverb that appears in Chaucer's Reeve's Tale: 'With empty hand men may none hawkes tulle [lure]'.

³⁴ *Outlandish Proverbs Selected by Mr G. H.* (London: T. Plaine for Humphrey Blundon, 1640). This was published anonymously, and only acknowledged as by Herbert in the reprinting of his works in the early 1650s.

³⁵ Desiderius Erasmus, *Collected Works*, vol. 31, *Adages*, trans. Margaret Mann Phillips (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 5; William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. I, l. 99.

the same point can be found in proverbs which focus upon intention: 'a gift much expected is paid not given'; 'he that gives quickly gives twice'.

Two other themes are routinely articulated in the proverbs and related sources. The first is the issue of unequal exchange. Among this group are those comments that indicate an awareness of deep asymmetry both human and divine: 'God and parents and our master can never be requited.' Generous adages stress the acceptability of even the smallest gift from the poor or weak, focusing on the biblical image of the widow's mite. Rhodes again expresses it eloquently:

If gifts thou receyve of any wyght
Well ponder their degree:
A kynde pore mans hartly rewarde
Is worth the other three.³⁶

But many sayings reveal a more instrumental awareness of the value and danger of unequal gifts: 'A small gift often brings a great reward'; 'A little given seasonably excuses a great gift'; 'A hook well lost catches a salmon'; 'You must lose a fly to catch a trout'; 'Great gifts are for great men'. The initial recording of these proverbs, with the exception of the first from Erasmus, comes from the seventeenth century and it is tempting to read them as reflecting some of the changes in power and patronage that marked that period. One seventeenth-century reader, Sir William Drake, certainly saw the application of these proverbial sentiments. He noted in one of his commonplace books that a Mr Henley had sent pigeons to the Duchess of Buckingham in order to gain favour, and quoted 'by gifts and presents a man attains his ends'.³⁷

The second theme moves into the realm of mistrust of the gift, or at least anxiety about its potential dangers. This is the territory in which commentary on gifts and bribes intersect. Fears are expressed that parallel our own adage: 'beware of Greeks bearing gifts', the form that contemporaries derived from Erasmus here was 'gifts from enemies are dangerous'. There are also anxieties about the burdens imposed by the gift register. An early and interesting example is the warning the goodwife gave her daughter in a fifteenth-century tract: 'bounden forsooth sche is/ that of ony may takith giftis'.³⁸ This is recorded as proverbial wisdom a number of times in the seventeenth century. Other, similar, sentiments are derived either from classical or modern European sources, but seem to have been assimilated quite readily into English: 'he that is beholden to another is not himself'; 'who takes courtesy of another sells his liberty'; 'better spare to have thine own then ask of other men'. And, at the margin between anxiety and outright fear is the saying preserved by Herbert in this form, 'gifts enter everywhere without a wimble [gimlet]'. This can, according to context, be applied to outright bribes or to the intrusive quality of even ordinary gifts when they burden the spirit and create obligation.

Little can be done to weigh the significance of one set of sayings against another: even the regular recurrence of some and the singular appearance of others offers little guide to the depth or otherwise of contemporary concerns.

³⁶ Rhodes, in Furnivall, *Manners and Meals*, 102.

³⁷ Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions*, 103.

³⁸ 'How the Good Wif taughte hir Doughtir', in Furnivall, *Manners and Meals*, 40.

Collectively they indicate a bifurcated reading of the gift register: the spiritual and moral rewards of generosity, and the enhancement of friendship and loyalty that derive from giving, are set against the burden the gift imposes on the recipient and the danger that the gifting and bribing become one and the same thing. 'Gifts speake the givers,' says George Herbert in one of his early poems: a double-edged comment when the recipient of his present was Sir Francis Bacon.³⁹ Sir John Oglander, commenting on New Year's gifts in 1622, notes both elements: the gift shows the 'thankful mind of the giver', but 'if any man should think to engage me by his gifts, I would regive him twice as much again, and thereby make myself a freeman'.⁴⁰

It is difficult, due to their nature, to locate the origins of proverbs. A number of the specific observations on gifts have, as we shall see, a classical origin, made accessible to English readers in print form in the late fifteenth century via Earl Rivers's translation of *The Dicts of the Philosophers*, and Caxton's of Jacques Le Grand's *Book of Good Maners*, originally published at the end of the fourteenth century.⁴¹ Others may have a longer indigenous pedigree. In either case they were used in a social environment in the late Middle Ages that saw the household and its service as central to social organization and the virtues of giving as often expressed through hospitality and fidelity to kin.⁴²

With the publication of Erasmus's *Adages* maxim-based proverbial wisdom was given the crucial imprimatur of Renaissance scholarship. The *Adages* are far from embodying a generic English wisdom, based as they are on classical sources. But Erasmus had a very deliberate eye to issues that were current in his own culture, and his work was hugely influential also on future generations of moralists. It also became a standard part of grammar school training, and hence absorbed into the mainstream of English culture. And Erasmus not only recorded the sayings and his sources: he glossed his text to provide his readers with a proper understanding of this aphoristic wisdom, and indications of how to use it in their own rhetoric. Erasmus began his comments with ideas of exchange that stressed reciprocity and the mutuality of the gift. He took Hesiod in the *Georgics*, to exemplify giving and receiving favours: 'Give to the one who gives, and not to the one who gives not. One gives to the giver, no one gives to the giftless.' Advancing upon this he

³⁹ *Complete Works in Verse and Prose of George Herbert*, ed. Alexander Balloch Grosart, 3 vols. (London: private print, 1874), 164.

⁴⁰ Francis Bamford (ed.), *A Royalist's Notebook: the Commonplace Book of Sir John Oglander of Nunwell* (London: Constable, 1936), 5.

⁴¹ *The Dicts*, originally compiled by Mubashshir ibn Fatik in the eleventh century, circulated widely in medieval Europe. Rivers's translation was from the French: *Here Endeth the Book Named the Dictes and Sayengis of the Philosophres*, trans. Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers (London: Caxton, 1477). Jacques Le Grand, c. 1365–1415, built his book of household advice out of a combination of classical and biblical authorities: *Here Begynneth the Table of a Book Entitled the Book of Good Maners*, trans. William Caxton, (London: Caxton, 1487).

⁴² The early proverbs cited above are largely drawn from household books. On the general theme of the dominance of household culture see Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), ch. 2; Lorna Hutson, *The Usurer's Daughter: Male Friendship and Fictions of Women in Sixteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 1994), 2–3.

reflected on the common assumption that men should be repaid 'by the same measure', but used Hesiod to argue that there should be a greater return for the gift given. On the other hand the dangers of extremely unequal gifts were considered through the example of Diomedes and Glaucus, whose friendship was sealed with bronze exchanged for gold, creating enmity. This narrative, says Erasmus, should be used rhetorically when good service is repaid with bad, or something less tangible, but more valuable, like fidelity, is lost in the exchange.⁴³

The *Adages* in general show a markedly sceptical view of giving. Even the gods are won over by gifts and, though Seneca is quoted in a neutral spirit, the winning involved had sinister overtones for most of the classical authors cited. Buying is seen as more desirable than begging, and here Seneca is quoted at length on the humiliation of asking for a gift. And then Erasmus expatiated at length on the gift as poison: the gifts of enemies are no gifts. He comments on this not only using rather obvious examples like Pandora's Box and Ajax's sword from Hector, but with a sharper application to his own society: 'The proverb can be applied to those, poor themselves, who aim at the favour of the rich by little presents, thus hoping to induce them to be generous. This is not giving but begging.' Among those who might be charged with this behaviour Erasmus ranks 'flatterers' and 'poets' as givers of false gifts. But the reader is eventually reminded of the true nature of the gift with, 'in gifts it is the spirit that matters', citing an abundance of examples from the Bible to Seneca. When Richard Taverner translated some of the *Adages* in 1539 he put it as follows: 'in the gyftes of presentes of freendes the price or value of the thing that is sent is not considered, but the mynde rather of the sender'.⁴⁴

These were the sentiments imbibed by every Tudor schoolboy. Moreover, if those boys were later required to improve their moral understanding and rhetorical skill with further reading they would be fed more of the same language. The necessary classical authorities on gifts and benefits were already being paraded in early sixteenth-century printed books: Plato and Aristotle for general moral commentary, Cicero, especially the *De amicitia* and *De officiis*, and the Seneca of *De beneficiis* long before the last three were available in full translation. Juan Vives in *Introduction to Wisedome* (translated by Richard Morison in 1540), may be taken as typical. He praised measured liberality, emphasized that it was the spirit, not the quantity of giving that was important. He used Seneca to argue that it was crucial to consider what should be given, to whom, and in what circumstances, and Cicero to establish criteria by which one might judge 'the greatnesse of the benefite'.⁴⁵ William Baldwin, writing later than Vives, but published in the same mid-Tudor years, moved between the Greeks and Seneca in his endeavours to offer a coherent philosophy of giving and receiving. In the process, he isolated from Seneca a few points more specific than some of the other

⁴³ Erasmus, *Collected Works*, vol. 31: *Adages*, 144–6.

⁴⁴ *Proverbs or Adagies with New Addicions Gathered out of the Chyliades of Erasmus by Richard Taverner* (London: Richard Bankes, 1539), sig. Di^r.

⁴⁵ Juan Luis Vives, *Introduction to Wisedome*, trans. Richard Morison (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1550), fo. 69^r.

moralists. Benefits received should be 'published abroad'; do not give unsuitable gifts, armour to a woman or books to a ploughman; ensure that the recipient will 'delight in' the gift. But, while the spirit in the gift is apparently all-encompassing for Baldwin, he manages to insert more calculative sentiments. 'Give,' he says, 'liberally for thy profite', and 'one gifte well given, recovereth manye losses'.⁴⁶

The use to which these worthy, and prudential, sentences might be put is demonstrated in Thomas Wilson's *The Arte of Rhetorique* (1554). Wilson, a distinguished classicist as well as royal servant, set out to translate the rules of rhetoric, as constructed by Quintilian, into a practical handbook for men of affairs. Like Erasmus, he sought to apply his formal rhetorical training to practical circumstances and to the cadences of the vernacular. In an 'oration demonstrative' for the praise of great men, Wilson showed how to expound the virtues of his subject. His thankfulness was to be praised, which:

is a requiting of love, for love, and wil for will, shewing
to our frendes the like goodnesse that we finde in them, yea
striving to pass them in kyndenesse, losyng neither tyme
nor tyde to do them good.⁴⁷

Later in the text Wilson offered a helpful set of sentences for commending liberality. They were mainly predictable sentiments like 'God loveth the gladde giver', and a range of rather bland comments on reciprocity. However, even in this context a note of warning was introduced: 'he that gyveth to hym that wyll evyll use it, giveth no good thing, but an evil thing'.⁴⁸ Wilson's influential text went through eight editions before 1585 and Gabriel Harvey later called it, 'the dailie bread of our common pleaders & discourers'. It underpins many of the words about gifts and gratitude that we encounter over the following century.⁴⁹

By the early Elizabethan period Englishmen had therefore learned how to talk at large about gifting and generosity, invoking the aid of the ancients through *sententiae*. Thereafter they were subjected to an increasingly sophisticated battery of ethical commentary from both indigenous authors and translated works. It is tempting to move immediately to the culmination of this process: the translations of Seneca's *De beneficiis*. But Seneca, already as we have seen quoted quite extensively in early Tudor England, embodied only one approach to moral guidance on generosity and exchange. Much of the Elizabethan commentary developed a slightly different strain of thinking, that evolving from late medieval materials that took the Aristotelian cardinal virtues as their focus.⁵⁰ Sir Thomas Elyot's *Boke Named the Governour* (1531), stands as a highly influential text exemplifying this approach. Its focus on 'those

⁴⁶ William Baldwin, *A Treatise of Moral Philosophy: Contaynyng the Sayings of the Wise* (London: Thomas Paulfreyman, 1571), fos. 121^v-2^r.

⁴⁷ Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique* (London: Richard Grafton, 1554), fo. 18^v.

⁴⁸ Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique*, fo. 65^v.

⁴⁹ Virginia F. Stern, *Gabriel Harvey: his Life, Marginalia, and Library* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 239.

⁵⁰ Mervyn James, 'English Politics and the Concept of Honour, 1485-1642', in his *Society, Politics and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 357-70.

who govern' makes its reach rather narrower than Erasmus's, but the eight editions through which it passed testify to the appeal it had for generations of English gentlemen. Elyot's second and third books are devoted to consideration of the social and moral virtues, and include discussions of beneficence, liberality, and ingratitude. Cicero is more often his guide on these matters than Seneca. Here, for example, on the relationship between material generosity and that of the spirit: 'beneficence is never taken but in the better part, and (as Tully saith) is taken out of virtue, where liberality cometh out of the coffer'.⁵¹ Nevertheless it is liberality to which Elyot devotes most attention, and his concern for fashioning a gentleman has as part of its focus the idea of household generosity.⁵² And Elyot here not only isolates an issue that was of obvious relevance to a landed élite: he follows the general priorities of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle identified four sorts of occasions when a liberal man should be munificent: unique moments such as weddings; times when the whole State required largesse; the reception and leave-taking of foreign guests; and only lastly the mutual exchange of gifts.⁵³ Gifts had to be situated in a wider pattern of social exchange that was required of the liberal man.

Philosophical and moral tracts of the Elizabethan years, like Thomas Rogers's *Philosophicall Discourse* (1576), Henry Crosse's *Vertues Commonwealth* (1602), or the anonymous *The Meane in Spending* (1598), took their structural form from the cardinal virtues and tended to discuss gifts, benefits, and hospitality under the headings of liberality, magnificence, and gratitude.⁵⁴ These are distinguished from the earlier collections of moral sayings mainly by the specificity of their advice, and the growing complexity of the classical narratives used to support it. On liberality the Aristotelian mean of a path between avarice and prodigality was often invoked, though there was disagreement about its meaning. For Crosse, liberality 'is a mediocritie in giving benefits'. It might include some reward to friends, but should focus upon succouring orphans, bestowing poor maidens in marriage, and other works of charity.⁵⁵ For the author of *The Meane in Spending*, it was a precious metal, given in due season by the true gentleman, and shown particularly in his hospitality to all needy comers.⁵⁶ For William Vaughan in *The Golden-Grove* (1600) it was a virtue that involved giving, and also sometimes receiving 'whereby not onely the participation of gifts and money are meant; but also the communication of good counsels and duties are understood'.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Book Named the Governor*, ed. Stanford E. Lehmberg (London: Dent, 1962), 131.

⁵² On this issue see Heal, *Hospitality*, 24–7.

⁵³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. and ed. Roger Crisp, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 66–7.

⁵⁴ Thomas Rogers, *A Philosophicall Discourse, Entituled, The Anatomie of the Minde* (London: John Charlewood for Andrew Maunsell, 1576); Henry Crosse, *Vertues Commonwealth or the High-way to Honour* (London: Thomas Creede for John Newbery, 1602); Anon, *The Meane in Spending* (London: V. Simmes, 1598).

⁵⁵ Crosse, *Vertues Commonwealth*, sig. l4^r.

⁵⁶ *Meane in Spending*, sig. F3^r.

⁵⁷ William Vaughan, *The Golden-Grove Moralized in Three Bookes: a Worke Very Necessary for all Such, as Would Know how to Governe Themselves, their Houses, or their Country* (London: Simon Stafford, 1600), sig. H3^v.

These and similar texts provided an answer to the question what is a gift only rather coincidentally as part of their wider moral concerns. The appeal of Seneca's *De beneficiis* was that it took the circulation of benefits, and the dangers of ingratitude, as the central themes of social ethics.⁵⁸ Cicero may have argued that 'there is nothing goodlier, then requiting of benefits', but his thoughts on exchange were scattered across several texts, and even *De officiis* offered a less profound exploration of the theme than did Seneca.⁵⁹ So, during the late Elizabethan period, the latter came to replace Aristotle and Cicero as the key site for interpreting reciprocity and gift transactions. In 1569 Nicholas Haward translated the first three books of *De beneficiis*, under the title *The Line of Liberalitie*, and ten years later a full version was provided by Arthur Golding. The title of the latter gives a strong sense of the issues that he thought important for his audience: *The Woorke of the Excellent Philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca Concerning Benefitting, that is to say the Dooing, Receyving and Requyting of Good Turnes*.⁶⁰ Neither of these seems to have been as popular as the third translation, undertaken by Thomas Lodge in 1614, but they did ensure that Anglophone readers no longer had to depend on the gobbled extracts from the philosopher that had been the staple of the earlier humanists.⁶¹

Seneca offered his readers a great diversity of ways of thinking about gifts. He dwelt, as Golding's heading indicated, on the circulation of benefits, using the Three Graces as his key metaphor. The Graces moving in an unbroken ring, embodied the principles of beneficence, giving, receiving, and requiting, for 'the beauty of the whole is destroyed if the course is anywhere broken'.⁶² They represented the principle that gifting should be bountiful, courteous, and transparent, and possessed of the moral beauty of youth and innocence. The Graces exercised a predictable influence on the poetic imagination. Spenser used their dance in both the *Shepherdes Kalendar* and the *Faerie Queene*, complimenting Elizabeth

⁵⁸ It is a small, but telling, illustration of how important the text was in the early seventeenth century that Seneca's portrait in the frieze encircling the reading room in the Bodleian Library has a copy of the book accompanying it—in this it is virtually unique among the large number of portraits of learned men painted there.

⁵⁹ *The Booke of Freendship of Marcus Tullie Cicero*, trans. John Harington (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1550), fo. 34^v. The popularity of translations of *De officiis*, available from the early 1550s onwards, means, however, that much of the language of liberality continued to be framed by Cicero. See, in particular, *Marcus Tullius Ciceroes Thre Bokes of Duties to Marcus his Sonne*, trans. Nicolas Grimaldi, 1st edn. (London: Richard Tottell, 1556) which went through eight editions between 1556 and 1600.

⁶⁰ Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *The Line of Liberalitie, Dulie Directing the Wel Bestowing of Benefites*, trans. Nicholas Haward (London: Thomas Marshe, 1569); *The Woorke of the Excellent Philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca Concerning Benefitting, that is to say the Dooing, Receyving and Requyting of Good Turnes*, trans. Arthur Golding (London: John Kingston for John Day, 1578).

⁶¹ In, *The Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca, both Morall and Naturall*, trans. Thomas Lodge (London: William Stansby, 1614). There is an interesting after-history of translating *De beneficiis*, since the version produced by Charles II's censor Roger L'Estrange went through seven editions between the 1670s and the end of the century: *Seneca's Morals by Way of Abstract* (London: Henry Brome, 1st edn. 1678).

⁶² *De beneficiis*, I, iv. Translation is from Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *III Moral Essays*, trans. John W. Basore (London: William Heinemann, 1935).

as a fourth grace. In *Shepherd's Kalendar*, he glossed their appearance in April as 'Goddesses of al bountie and comelines' adding that the one Grace turned from the viewer, and the two facing towards her or him indicated 'double thanke to be due to us for the benefit we have done'.⁶³

But Seneca's appeal was not generally about the visual or aesthetic imagining of generosity. He wrote far more fully than others of the importance of right-giving and its capacity to enhance the well-being of the giver and recipient:

What is a benefit then? It is a frendly good deede, giving gladnesse and taking pleasure in giving, foreward and redie of its owne accord, too doo the thing that it dooeth. And therefore it is not material what is doon, or what is given, but with what mind. For the good turne consisteth not in the thing that is doon or given; but in the verie intent of the dooer or giver.⁶⁴

Doing good turns and reciprocating them was the way in which the true community of men was maintained, and Seneca devoted much space to the prescriptions that would ensure social harmony.⁶⁵ His key concern was the moral development of the individual, and what personal reward accrued to those who behaved benevolently. *De beneficiis* has been described as a text of 'Stoic optimism', and it is indeed constructed upon the premisses that men can be persuaded to do good if they understand their own nature aright. Seneca ends with the argument that 'persistent goodness wins over bad men'. Yet much of the detail of the later sections of the text are designed to persuade the reader that the pervasive vice of ingratitude which 'destroys the harmony of the human race' can be overcome, and the tone of the writing betrays deep anxiety beneath the positive exterior.⁶⁶ Gifts and benefits are not free, however freely given, and the recipient has to be willing to become indebted to the giver. 'He who is unwilling to be indebted is ungrateful', and rejection can take the form of direct repulse or too much haste in returning benefit for benefit. The articulation of gratitude is a difficult thing, and one which Seneca clearly feels is all too frequently not achieved.⁶⁷

Although Seneca's readers were left in no doubt about the centrality of the spirit in giving, the impact of his text also lay in its cool advice on the objects that should be exchanged. Gifts to aid the needy and to relieve kin should be separated from those that 'serve but for deliyght', but in practice it is the use of the last in political relationships that are of paramount interest. Delightful gifts, he says, could take many forms: the essence was an awareness of the nature of the recipient and, when

⁶³ Edmund Spenser, *Shepherd's Kalendar*, April Eclogue I, 109. On the significance of the Graces in Renaissance culture see Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (New York: Norton, 1958), 26–35; Davis, *The Gift*, 18–20.

⁶⁴ *Concerning Benefiting*, fo. 6.

⁶⁵ In one of the best analyses of the significance of Seneca in early modern England, Wallace focuses on this societal dimension of his thought, but gives too little credence to the emphasis of the text on the personal importance of giving and receiving: John M. Wallace, 'Timon of Athens and the Three Graces: Shakespeare's Senecan study', *Modern Philology* 83 (1986), 349–63.

⁶⁶ See E. Catherine Dunn, *The Concept of Ingratitude in Renaissance English Moral Philosophy* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1946), 1–42.

⁶⁷ *De beneficiis*, VII, xxx. 2; III, xvii, 4.

suitable, the offering of something that was imperishable: 'let it abyde with my freend, let it sticke by hym, let it live and dye with hym'. So, 'silver wrought' is to be preferred to coin, and statues and pictures to clothing. Presents should be rare rather than costly, pleasing even the rich man as something he does not already possess.⁶⁸ Gifts of this kind should be given publicly, performing an ideal of generosity, though Seneca also acknowledged a place for private gifts when they involved such things as relieving suffering friends. The recipient, when seeking to return a benefit, must acknowledge that thankfulness, the beginning of return, is not of itself sufficient. It must be materially rewarded, ideally of course with a greater offering than that of the initial prestation.⁶⁹

And Elizabethan readers of the Senecan text cannot have failed to hear in his denunciations of ingratitude and his anxiety about the prevalence of forgetfulness by the great, ideas that had great purchase in their own fiercely competitive world. Sir William Cornwallis, writing on friendship and faction, echoed some of those anxieties:

It is dangerous if we enjoy a friend much our superiour to doe him offices, not easily requited, such impossibilities make him desparate, and desirous to cancel that obligation with some action, that you shall not afterwards be able to complaine of his Ingratitude.⁷⁰

Or here is Sir Thomas Egerton, writing to King James in 1606, and complaining that his labours and length of service have brought no reward 'when I see many (yt becomes me not to saye, of as smalle merite as my self...) plentifully watered with the gracious streames of the royall fountayne of your bountie'.⁷¹ The difficulties of giving found powerful expression in the literature of these decades. Spenser bitterly denounced the courtier's role in *Mother Hubberd's Tale*: he was destined 'To fawne, to crouche, to waite, to ride, to runne/ to spend, to give, to want, to be undone'.⁷² At a slightly later date Ben Jonson's *Volpone* was a satirical response to the Stoic pieties of beneficent giving, and Marston's *The Fawn* exposed the corruption of the gift.⁷³

The most remarkable range of reflection on the nature of the gift in early modern England comes from the literary imagination of Shakespeare. It is a test, of a sort, of the significance of concerns about giving and receiving in late sixteenth-century culture that *Timon of Athens*, *Merchant of Venice*, and *King Lear*, all have gift economies at their heart. *Timon* is often taken as the riposte to the Senecan/Stoic theory of beneficence.⁷⁴ Timon can be represented as a giver who follows

⁶⁸ *Concerning Benefiting*, fo. 9^r. ⁶⁹ *De beneficiis*, II, xxxv, 1–3.

⁷⁰ William Cornwallis, *Essayes* (London: by S. Stafford for Edmund Mattes, 1600), sig. Eiv^r. This is another popular work, going through multiple editions before the Civil War.

⁷¹ HHL, Ellesmere MS, no. 162.

⁷² Edmund Spenser, *Prosopopoia: or Mother Hubberds Tale*, ll. 905–6.

⁷³ Linda Levy Peck, 'John Marston's *The Fawn*: Ambivalence and Jacobean Courts', in David Lawrence Smith et al. (eds.), *The Theatrical City: Theatre and Politics in London, 1576–1649* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 117–36.

⁷⁴ This is essentially the argument of Wallace's '*Timon of Athens*', and some connected ideas are developed in Coppélia Kahn, "'Magic of bounty": *Timon of Athens*, Jacobean Patronage and Maternal Power', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 38 (1981), 34–57.

many of the precepts of *De beneficiis*, only to be brought low by the ingratitude of those on whom he had lavished their every desire. In Act 4 Flavius reflects on the giver left friendless:

Who would be so mocked with glory, or to live
But in a dream of friendship,
To have his pomp and all what state compounds
But only painted like his varnished friends?
Poor honest lord, brought low by his own heart,
Undone by goodness!⁷⁵

Timon's bounty, however, presents problems. The key is that it lacks proper discrimination: it misses precisely that care about giving in the correct circumstances that Seneca had sought to inculcate. Timon gives at the merest ask, and when he is given seeks to render again twenty-fold. Neither his gift-exchanges, nor the hospitality which represents a large part of his generosity, are dispensed with any understanding of the need to construct true reciprocal relationships. The multiplication of benefits breeds contempt, as the senator in Act 2 shows:

If I want gold, steal but a beggar's dog,
And give it Timon—why the dog coins gold;
If I would sell my horse and buy twenty more
Better than he—why give my horse to Timon;
Ask nothing, give it him, it foals me straight
And able horses.⁷⁶

So, from the inception of the play we are pointed not merely to the future downfall of Timon as his 'friends' become false ingrates: we are constantly reminded of the Senecan views of the gift. There may be something magnificent about this largesse: it is not a magnificence that the Roman would for a moment condone. And from the false understanding of giving comes the disaster of a man condemned to begging for roots.

Here, and elsewhere, Shakespeare in fact seems to endorse the message that the proper spirit has to be conveyed by the gift, but matches to this a strong prudential caution about the dangers of misunderstanding. Lear's gift of his kingdom is so ill-conceived that it turns this most remarkable of offerings into a commodity to be traded to the highest bidder. And gifts that are bartered, as Regan and Goneril barter with their father, cease to be gifts. It also, incidentally, raises an issue about gifts which goes beyond the Senecan commentary: that some things are inalienable, and that Lear's gift had inverted the natural order and hierarchy of the State.⁷⁷ The kingdom is priceless and should not be given in gift, except by lawful descent. Only Cordelia's gift of love is equally priceless, and equally inevitably destroyed by the tragedy of Lear's inability to comprehend it.

⁷⁵ Act 4, Sc. 2, ll. 33–8.

⁷⁶ Act 2, Sc. 1, ll. 5–10.

⁷⁷ For a valuable discussion of Lear and gifts, see Scott, *Selfish Gifts*, 27–37. The inalienability of the gift Lear tried to give presents similar problems to those discussed in Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions*.

The gifts of *Merchant of Venice* address more explicitly the boundary between market commodity and gift register. The suitors, with the exception of Bassanio, have a false view of exchange, assuming intrinsic worth must be displayed through extrinsic wealth: Portia's portrait must reside in gold or silver. On the other hand, Portia's offering of her ring to Bassanio shows the proper understanding of the material token in which the spirit of giving inheres, though her accompanying speech and the subsequent crisis of the plot reminds the audience of the limits of alienability:

This house, these servants, and this same myself
Are yours—my lord's—I give them with this ring
Which when you part from, lose, or give away
Let it presage the ruin of your love
And be my vantage to exclaim on you.⁷⁸

In each of these plays, and in lesser degree in *Love's Labours' Lost*, Shakespeare shows an acute sensitivity to the significance and the vulnerability of gift-exchange, something it may be presumed he anticipated his audiences would share.⁷⁹

There are surely few periods of English history when worries about gifts would have engaged audiences more than in the late years of Elizabeth and the reign of James I. due to the crisis of the patronage system was caused first by the difficult war years of the 1590s, then by the king's excessive largesse, and then by the monopolistic control of the Duke of Buckingham as royal favourite. The consequences were an indecent scramble for gifts, and an inevitable questioning of optimistic aspects of the Senecan vision. Corruption was denounced from the pulpit and beneficiaries of the patronage system were readily condemned as bribe-takers poisoning the body politic.⁸⁰

There were those, however, who still hoped that a gift could combine the moral qualities of generosity and disinterest with some of the engagement in social transaction that fructified exchange. Away from the Court, a noble or gentleman could perhaps proceed honourably, as Seneca had advocated, and his values seeped into the growing genre of advice from fathers to sons and into general conduct literature. Richard Brathwaite, in *The English Gentleman* (1630), spoke wistfully of the behaviour attributed to Henry V, who recorded promises made, for courtesies received, in his own hand. 'Reciprocall courtesie' remained at the heart of good social relations among gentlemen, said Brathwaite. Moreover, 'bountie is a motive to love; for giving gifts gathereth friends; which bountie is most worthy acceptance when done with cheerfulness'.⁸¹ Brathwaite was avowedly traditional: focusing upon the roles of a gentleman as leader of his community, man of substance in the

⁷⁸ Act 3: Sc. 2, II. 170–4. On gifts in *Merchant of Venice* see Richard A. Sharp, 'Gift Exchange and the Economies of the Spirit in *The Merchant of Venice*', *Modern Philology* 83 (1986), 250–65.

⁷⁹ *Love's Labours' Lost* can also be seen as a reflection on forms of exchange: M. T. Burnett, 'Giving and Receiving: *Love's Labours' Lost* and the Politics of Exchange', *English Literary Renaissance*, 23 (1993), 287–313.

⁸⁰ See Chapter 7, and Peck, *Court Patronage*, esp. 185–97.

⁸¹ Richard Brathwaite, *The English Gentleman* (London: John Haviland, 1630), 265, 270.

localities, and giver of hospitality.⁸² Other advice was often more worldly without fully subverting classical ideals. Henry Percy, ninth Earl of Northumberland, urged his son Algernon to be 'the giver of yowr owen guifts'. Reciprocity was the objective of giving, but 'to give well and advantageously will aske a great deal of art... how to give, that yow may have the thanks... in it lyeth the mistery'.⁸³

Finally we can move to Thomas Hobbes, looking at beneficence and gift-exchange from across the watershed of the Civil War, a crisis that might well be thought to have broken the social bonds valued by men such as Brathwaite. Hobbes's extensive comments on gifts both bear witness to their continuing significance in this culture and offer a cool calculation of the role they could play in upholding social cohesion. All collective action had, for Hobbes, one overwhelming justification, the endeavouring of peace and self-preservation; the reason for which men entered into civil society. Hobbes knew his Seneca, and seized upon the latter's discussions of beneficence, predictably inverting the motives of the participants in this form of exchange. In reflecting on liberality in *De cive*, he followed him in denying that the material object exchanged, whether small or great, was what constituted generosity, but 'the cause for the sake of which the gift was made'. It should 'endeavour peace'.⁸⁴ This is a view that he repeated in *Leviathan* and *The Elements of Law*, and is consistent with his thinking on all aspects of social behaviour.

Hobbes explicitly challenged contemporary views about the mutuality of gift-exchange. Contract, the process by which each man transferred his right to others, could bind to a return: the gift could not do so.⁸⁵ In *Leviathan* he observed that 'no man giveth but with intention of Good to himselfe; because Gift is voluntary; and of all Voluntary Acts, the Object to every man is his own Good'.⁸⁶ This led him to observe of great gifts between equals, that they could nourish 'secret hatred' rather than love, since they might prove unrequitable: 'Benefits oblige, and obligation is thraldome, and unrequitable obligation perpetuall thraldome.' Gift-exchange conceptualized as obligation stood for him in total contrast to the surrender of contractual rights on which the proper commonwealth must be founded. Hobbes was nevertheless disposed to valorize the gift. Gifts to inferiors 'encline to love', and usually only requires the response of gratitude. Even gifts between equals could foster sociability for 'in the intention of the receiver, the obligation is of ayd and service mutuall'.⁸⁷ So, an account of gifts that emanates from self-interest and the

⁸² On the view of gentility he espoused see Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500–1700* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), 17. On his views on giving see Ben-Amos, *Culture of Giving*, 257–60.

⁸³ 'The Instructions of Henry Percy, Ninth Earl of Northumberland, to his Son Algernon Percy', ed. J. H. Markland, *Archaeologia* 27 (1838), 342.

⁸⁴ Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive: the English Version*, ed. Howard Warrender (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pt. 3, ch. 32; Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 325.

⁸⁵ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan, or the Matter, Form and Power of a Commonwealth* (London: Andrew Crooke, 1651), pt. 1, ch. 14. On this limitation of the gift and the exclusion of contract see Liebersohn, *Return of the Gift*, 29–31.

⁸⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pt. 1, ch. 15.

⁸⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pt. 1, ch. 11.

law of nature, can nevertheless be made conscious of the well-being of others, and can in some sense contribute to the collective good.

PRESENTING GIFTS

It is clear that the gift was a process, rather than exclusively a material entity, and that it depended for its success on proper understanding between the transacting parties. Specific gifts might have highly contingent meaning but there had to be a measure of cultural agreement for the performance that was gifting to succeed. Much of the analysis in the second half of this book will address process and gifts in action. It is useful here to note that good examples can readily be found of gift-exchange drawing upon the language and assumptions of the literature already discussed. We can observe the results in three fairly typical cases of individuals who employed the language and gestures of the gift register in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In February 1624, Dr Samuel Walsall, master of Corpus Christi, Cambridge, wrote to Lady Katherine Paston thanking her for some gift. He professed himself full of gratitude for the way in which she had been bountiful to him a second time: 'I may truly say, I have never, upon so little acquaintance and desert, received so much courtesie and bountie from any.' He was, he claimed, bound in a double bond of thankfulness and conscience to care for her 'hopeful' son: Will Paston was in his charge at Corpus.⁸⁸ The gift is not specified, though Will in another letter refers to it as his mother's 'great gift'. The gift was fructifying a relationship, the offering of a material object, eliciting carefully calibrated gratitude and the promise that further would be cycled on to the hopeful youth. This appears a text-book Senecan case of the proper transaction of benefits, and we can reasonably assume that here life imitated art, a classically trained academic articulating the approved normative behaviour. Although the relationship being established is of its social nature asymmetrical, it opened the way to exchanges of friendship and mutual support.⁸⁹

The second case involves the presentation of books as gifts, an important theme for any study of gifting in the Renaissance.⁹⁰ When James Aske wrote a pamphlet celebrating Elizabeth I's triumph over popery and the Armada, he dedicated it to Julius Caesar, Chief Justice of the Court of Admiralty:

The remembrance (he wrote) of the great courtesies I have received at your ever bountifull hands, makes me ashamed . . . as that I could in no time, sithence I first tasted of the abundance thereof, gratifie your Worship with some token of my not-ungratefull heart . . . I [now] present to your Worships liking the first fruit that my barren wit

⁸⁸ *The Correspondence of Lady Katherine Paston*, ed. Ruth Hughey (Norwich: Norfolk Record Society, 14, 1941), 67.

⁸⁹ See Wootton, 'Francis Bacon', 189–92 on the politics of friendship.

⁹⁰ Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Beyond the Market: Books as Gifts in Sixteenth-Century France', *TRHS*, 5th ser. 33 (1983), 69–88; Anne Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680–1750* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 19–20.

yielded... a Pamphlet greatly standing in need of your Worships patrocine, that by the protection of so learned a *Maecenas*, it may be defended from the biting jawe of snatching *Carpers*.⁹¹

The language is again pure Senecan, and in this particular case we encounter a gift-relationship that is already in motion. But there is a very explicit asymmetry in the request for 'patrocine', and for protection against 'snatching Carpers'. Aske is performing a role of dependency, downgrading his own offering into a token produced by a 'barren wit'. We must presume that this exchange works for both parties precisely because the social distance between patron and client is properly affirmed, permitting the trading of tangible benefits. Yet this type of gesture seems less confident than our first example: the adoption of the proper forms of performance could easily in this sort of case, be overlain by a refusal of the recipient to participate in the dance of the Graces. It had to be hoped that socially determined meaning would issue in proper behaviour by both the participants in the exchange.

My third example displays the most conscious artifice. One May morning, George, third Earl of Cumberland, sang before Elizabeth as he made her an offering proper to the feast:

Who gives a gift to binde a friend thereby,
Doth set or put his gift to usury
And he that gives a gift that is not free,
Give where he list, so that he give not me.
For bought and sold is friendship strange
Who live by selling, lives by change
And he that loves to change his friend,
Will turne to nothing in the end.⁹²

The earl clearly felt that he had to insist emphatically on the spirit of the gift as separated from any implication of interest. The fact that he was always in debt, and well-acquainted with the danger of usury, adds a certain piquancy to the ditty.⁹³ But the really intriguing theme here is the insistence that there can be no interchange between the gift and the market, any offering that has the colour of interest becomes binding 'usury'. Here the notion of the disinterest of the gift is taken to its rhetorical extreme, expressed in a world of courtly fantasy, remarkably alien from the realities of the competitive selfishness of the late Elizabethan and early Stuart polity.

⁹¹ James Aske, *Elizabetha Triumphans. Conteyning the Dammed Practises, that the Divelish Popes of Rome used ever Sithence her Highnesse First Coming to the Crowne* (London: T. Orwin for T. Gubbin and T. Newman, 1588), fo. 1^r.

⁹² Francis Davison, *A Poetical Rapsodie Containing: Diverse Sonnets, Odes, Elegies, Madrigals, Epigrams, Pastorals, Eglogues, with Other Poems* (London: William Stansby for Roger Jackson, 1611), 197. The first edition was published in 1602, and in it Davison refers to the May Day piece as sung the previous year.

⁹³ Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558–1641* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 532–4.

CONTEXTS

Connecting theorized judgements and ethical values to evidence of social behaviour is never an easy process. A search-engine quest for the term 'gift' through any body of primary sources material for early modern England shows predominant linguistic usages that have scarcely been considered in the discussion thus far. In printed texts—sermons, prescriptive writing, and the like—the dominant meaning is, of course, that associated with talents, divinely given to mankind. These gifts of God freely bestowed required their own reciprocation, both in the general use of skills and in the material obligation to reciprocate benefit through alms. Gascoigne's pageant, from which this chapter started, reminds us that when men in this culture thought of offerings, they thought first of divine largesse. The savage man's speech first assures us that gifts were above all the prerogative of the gods. It may be that in most cultures all gifts retain a faint imprint of the unrequitable debt that men owe to the gods, and it is this which sustains the immaterial, moral element in the exchange.⁹⁴ Certainly in sixteenth-century England the secular gift was often rhetoricized as but a shadow of the divine gift of grace, or the divine offering of spiritual and moral worth to the individual. 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights' was the biblical text cited by all those who insisted that earthly giving must be structured in accordance with the divine will.⁹⁵ It was agreed that postlapsarian man could not adequately reciprocate this grace: that it was not possible to participate satisfactorily in the cycle of benefit emanating from an all-loving God. The most that could be offered directly was thanks: 'be thou' wrote Richard Whitford, translating the *Imitatio Christi*, 'lovinge and thankfull to god for the leste benefyte he gyveth, and than thou shalte be the more apte to receyve of hym more greate benefaites'.⁹⁶ A century later Owen Felltham called himself 'a thankfull debtor', but acknowledged of God's favours: 'requite them I cannot, returne them I may not, and to rest ingratefull, were a sin inexcusable'.⁹⁷

Catholic works of theology offered the possibility of reciprocity, however unequal, as men participated in the sacrifice of the mass, in prayer, and in exchange between the living and the dead. This reciprocity was embedded in that which was done to others, not in a direct cycle of exchange with the divine. Protestantism, on the other hand, denied that men could in any way offer effective sacrifice to the Deity. The cycle of benefits was broken, leaving the conscientious Christian permanently aware of his debts: 'since I cannot retaliate thy love, or retribute thy favours,' concludes Felltham: 'Lord will I owe them, with a desire to pay.' That desire had to find its outlet in the reconstruction of exchange as beneficent giving manifesting the fruits of faith, achieved for the individual by Christ's imputed

⁹⁴ Osteen, *The Gift*, 241.

⁹⁵ Epistle of James, I:17.

⁹⁶ Richard Whitford, *A Booke Newly Translated out of Latyn in to Englishe, called The Following of Christe with the Golden Epistle of Saynt Barnard* (London: R. Redman, 1535), sig. Liii^r.

⁹⁷ Owen Felltham, *Resolves, Divine, Morall, Politicall* (London: G. Purslowe for Henry Seile, 1623), 146.

righteousness.⁹⁸ 'Onely the regenerate man may truly give,' said Thomas Cooper, 'because he onely hath right in what he hath.'⁹⁹

When contemporaries thought about gifts, and the gift register, they also assumed that both charity and giving within the family were essential aspects of Christian duty. Gifts to the gods displayed themselves in the form of beneficence, or acts of altruism, so constructed as to appear to be anticipating nothing but a divine reward. They represent a separate category of social action, usually denoted by the specific language of alms and donations, distinguishing them from the cycle of benefits that characterize secular giving. Thomas Cooper was typical in analysing giving under separate categories: these were care for the soul; alms for the poor; and then gifts between parties.¹⁰⁰ Understanding forms of charitable action is particularly crucial in early modern culture precisely because of the shock of the Reformation. However, it is necessarily differentiated from secular gift-exchange. Only at moments when almsgiving involves competitive, emulative attitudes, or when familial and neighbourly exchange spills over into charity, do the two forms of transaction really appear congruent.¹⁰¹ These precepts will inform much of the ensuing discussion, but it will not concern itself explicitly with the gift as charitable beneficence.¹⁰²

Predominant uses of the term gift in contemporary sources are those of spiritual and charitable beneficence on the one hand, and of grant of title to land on the other. Real property, transmitted by grant or will, clearly provided the most substantial form of material benefit in this culture, and was the reward for which contemporaries ultimately competed when they sought reward from the Crown. The pursuit of these great benefits will play a part in what follows, but this is not a text primarily about the building of landed power, and therefore they will remain a context for those more immediate exchanges of benefit, the moveable gift. Nor is the transmission of possession, real or moveable, between generations a principal concern for this study. The rapid growth in the making of wills during the early modern period is not particularly valuable as evidence of attitudes to generosity, or of any particular enthusiasm for the gift register. Seneca reminded his readers that a disproportionate obsession with giving through testaments, which also characterized his society, though in one sense altruistic, did little to aid social solidarity.¹⁰³ Wills are certainly a crucial source of information for the material context of giving, and can often address pertinent questions such as what is thought inalienable in family terms. The bequest of heirlooms is a particularly fascinating aspect of the material element in gifting. Wills do not speak

⁹⁸ See Davis's important evaluation of religious change in thinking about gifts: *The Gift*, 167–208.

⁹⁹ Thomas Cooper, *The Art of Giving: Describing the True Nature and Right Use of Liberality* (London: T. Snodman for T. Pauler, 1615), 5.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Cooper, *The Art of Giving*, 2–4.

¹⁰¹ See Ben-Amos, *Culture of Giving*, esp. her chapter on 'Honour and Reputation', 195–241.

¹⁰² Charitable giving was first explored fully in Wilbur Kitchener Jordan, *Philanthropy in England, 1480–1660* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1959), which remains influential despite the deficiencies of its approach to quantification. For an important contribution to current debate see Steve Hindle, *On the Parish?: The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England c.1550–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). And now Ben-Amos, *Culture of Giving*.

¹⁰³ *De beneficiis*, IV, xi.

so powerfully to the cycle of benefits as *in vivos* giving, and they foreground family preoccupations at the expense of those of the wider society.¹⁰⁴

In the first half of this book I examine elements in English culture that demonstrate the importance of the gift, and the contexts in which exchange occurs. One of the contexts that is significant is that of the market. Ideas of credit and trust were of the essence of market transactions, but with their emphasis on moral worth and responsibility, and the personal relationships they articulate, they seem close to the gift.¹⁰⁵ This could result, in an extreme case, in little heed being paid to the difference between a gift and a loan. Oliver Heywood described the godly minister John Angier of Denton as remarking of money returned to him: 'it is all one, whether it was a debt or a gift, so God send it in needful time'.¹⁰⁶ Conversely gifts were regularly attributed a monetary value, and often carefully exchanged in like-for-like transactions, or accompanied by some financial reward, which seems inconsistent with uncalibrated beneficence.¹⁰⁷ The proper gift had to pay heed to the worth, in the sense of honour, of the transacting parties and, the ability to assign a monetary value to the thing given, could be an appropriate part of that evaluation.¹⁰⁸ The reward for services, especially the professional services of lawyers, doctors, and royal clerks, also exist at the boundary between gift and market payment.¹⁰⁹ In all these instances it is not the assignment of a specific monetary value that removes a transaction from the gift register, rather the attitude of the participants to the exchange, and the perception about what is happening by third parties.

A key context for the recording and calibrating of gifts, especially those of food, is the household accounts of the élite, which are used extensively in this book. English landowners had largely accepted the market economy since the leasing of most demesne land in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and the household system was therefore firmly focused upon the market and monetized calculation. Daily accounting, which yields most of our information, was primarily a means of costing everything in cash terms to prevent fraud and waste. Gifts had to be incorporated into this regime.¹¹⁰ The effect was sometimes to marginalize gifts in

¹⁰⁴ On heirlooms see Martha C. Howell, 'Fixing Movables: Gifts by Testament in Late Medieval Douai', *PP* 150 (1996), 3–45. Ben-Amos, *Culture of Giving*, 146–56 stresses the importance of inter-generational generosity through wills, though she recognizes the difficulty of a systematic study of the evidence.

¹⁰⁵ Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, esp. 123–47.

¹⁰⁶ *Oliver Heywood's Life of John Angier of Denton*, ed. Ernest Axon (Manchester: Chetham Society NS 97, 1937), 95.

¹⁰⁷ See especially Chapter 2, and Felicity Heal, 'Food Gifts, the Household and the Politics of Exchange in Early Modern England', *PP* 199 (2008), 41–70.

¹⁰⁸ For examples of how this operated among the Dutch in the seventeenth century see Irma Thoen, *Strategic Affections? Gift Exchange in Seventeenth-Century Holland* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2007), esp. 180–4.

¹⁰⁹ For France in Davis, *The Gift*, 73–109.

¹¹⁰ Christopher Michael Woolgar (ed.), *Household Accounts from Medieval England*, 2 vols. (Oxford: British Academy Records of Social and Economic History, 1992), I, chs. 3 and 4; Christopher Michael Woolgar, 'Gifts of Food in Late Medieval England', *Journal of Medieval History* 37:1 (2011), 6–18.

the records, and perhaps also in the consciousness of household officials, since they did not have a simple value assigned to them.¹¹¹ An accountant like the clerk of the kitchen to the ninth Earl of Northumberland could announce that presents were of nil value 'since they were occupied and spent in his Lordship's house'.¹¹² But it was equally common to link and value all purchases and presents, showing awareness that objectively they both served the needs of the household and might not need separate category status.

Hospitality, which I have studied exhaustively elsewhere, could be construed as an offering/gift; the everyday forms of mutual support between neighbours certainly counted. These were certainly for ordinary citizens the primary forms of gifting.¹¹³ And they were all too often unremarked as the norm of social exchange. 'No one,' says Seneca, 'enters his benefactions in his account-book.'¹¹⁴ However, that is precisely what some of the gift-givers of early modern England did. And far more recorded in their letters, dedications, diaries, and other notes precisely what they had received, in order to render thanks. This explicit record of material performance is the inevitable basis for this study. Material objects, social gestures, and benefits form the envelope that is the gift register of early modern England. The political gift, as Seneca knew well, was a material object, articulated through social gestures (of a more or less public kind), and designed to elicit a return in the form of benefits (office, land, political protection).

Towns provide yet another context for the analysis of gifts. English corporations frequently needed to make explicit choices, recorded in their formal minute books, about giving to the great on their travels, or about attracting patronage and support through judicious offerings to the monarch or a privy councillor.¹¹⁵ More generally urban centres, and particularly London, grew as places in which the élite gathered, and gestures of generosity could be made. And there are other specialized contexts in which gifts can be studied: the universities which regularly welcomed the great; the legal system, especially the perambulating assizes (this despite the dangers of gifts and the law).

But this is a book principally about gifts and politics, and the environment in which they can most effectively be studied: the Royal Court. The Tudor monarchs consciously cultivated ideas of honour and magnificence that required the performance of largesse, and stimulated competition for patronage and

¹¹¹ It is interesting that a number of the most systematic records of household gifts are those kept in person by the head of household, rather than by officials: see, for example, the Hardwick volume kept by Bess in the later 1590s: Chatsworth EstateTrust, Hardwick MS. Bk 8, or Sir William More's New Year 's gift lists: SHC, LM 1776.

¹¹² *The Household Papers of Henry Percy, Ninth Earl of Northumberland*, ed. Gordon R. Batho (London: Camden Society, 3rd ser. 93, 1962), 69.

¹¹³ Thoen, *Strategic Affections?* emphasizes that these are the wholly dominant forms of gifting among the Dutch bourgeoisie in the seventeenth century.

¹¹⁴ *De beneficiis*, 1, ii.

¹¹⁵ See Chapter 3, and Catherine Patterson, *Urban Patronage in Early Modern England: Corporate Boroughs, the Landed Elite and the Crown, 1580–1640* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

office. Their Stuart successors changed the nature of the game of royal giving, but remained attuned to the importance of gesture and display. There were both great opportunities and costs for the individual who, in Thomas Wyatt's vivid phrase, hung upon 'the slipper top/ of Court's estates'.¹¹⁶ And one of the best modes of self-presentation and self-evaluation was the giving and receiving of gifts, which could be done here with a publicity that was achievable nowhere else.

In so far as England possessed a gift economy in the century and a half before the Civil War, the Court was both its theatre and its primary treasury. That theatre was employed in many different ways by the participants in gift-exchange, and the second half of this book examines patterns of royal and élite giving that contemporaries found largely appropriate. The specific obligation to be generous to outsiders is then treated separately in relation to the growth of diplomacy. Finally, the dark side of gifting—bribery and corruption—will be analysed as the final theme. Self-interested gifting obviously readily crossed boundaries into unacceptable behaviour: however in a 'gift' book we need to tease out the expectations of contemporaries before reflecting on ways in which the political system was corroded by bribery.

Two terms are constantly used throughout this book: gift and gift-exchange. There is some distinction between the two: the first can refer exclusively to the material object, the second to the movement of the thing, its social trajectory. Both, however, usually imply exchange. Michel de Montaigne, thinking lovingly of his deep friendship with Etienne de la Boétie wrote in 'Of Affectionate Relationships' that the union of such friends drives out 'from between them all terms of division and difference, such as good turn, duty, gratitude, request, thanks and the like.'¹¹⁷ Gifts, in this ideal bond, cancel the notion of reciprocity. Indeed the very recognition of the existence of reciprocity cancels the nature of the gift.¹¹⁸ Some of the offerings that were of importance in early modern England display this denial of visible return: the gifts of God, and the deepest engagements of love and friendship. Intergenerational family giving and some charitable benefaction were also conceptualized in ways that did not seek direct

¹¹⁶ *Sir Thomas Wyatt: the Complete Poems*, ed. R.A. Rebholz (London: Penguin, 1978), no. XLIX. One of Wyatt's other short epigrams evokes wonderfully the material culture of the Henrician Court and the bitter-sweet experience of life there:

In court to serve, decked with fresh array,
Of sugared meats feeling the sweet repast,
The life in banquets and sundry kinds of play
Amid the press of lordly looks to waste,
Hath with it joined oft-times such bitter taste
That whoso joys such kind of life to hold,
In prison joys, fettered with chains of gold. (LXXI)

¹¹⁷ Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, trans. Michael A. Screech (London: Penguin, 1987), 214.

¹¹⁸ This is a part of Derrida's critique of the Maussian view of the gift: an offering, like counterfeit money, retains its value only so long as it is not recognized for what it is: Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

reciprocation. But the key exchanges that this book studies were inherently transactional and intended to be mutual, in a social and political, if not always in an economic, sense. To give was to enter a cycle of reciprocation. And so to speak of a gift in the following chapters is usually to add a silent 'exchange' to the language.

2

Gifts Small and Great

TOKENS

Seneca argued that a benefit could not be touched with the hand, since its province was the mind.¹ However, the gift also contained matter: the thing given was necessary to consummate the benefit. When the bonds of loyalty, affinity, or friendship were what the exchange was supposed to cement, the material commodity could be modest, or at least its value might be decried to enhance the significance of intangible behaviour. This led donors, and sometimes recipients, constantly to employ the language of tokens. In late medieval texts ‘token’ is most routinely paired with the term ‘sign’ or, in chivalric works, with ‘badge’. Typical is Richard Fitzjames’s reference in a 1495 sermon to ‘vysble sygnes and outward tokens’.² Much of the time this was language that was applied to any manifestation of something inward or hidden. The token symbolized or evidenced a fact, feeling, or event. It could also be employed either to identify and authenticate the bearer of a message, or to describe a password shared by individuals.³

But the token had already assumed a specific meaning as a modest material object that initiated, sustained, or developed a relationship through gift. When the Rule of St Benedict was translated in 1517 it included the passage: ‘in no wyse it shall be lawfull to a minchin [nun] to receyve letters, tokens, or any other small gyftes frome fader other or moder’.⁴ This function of the token as an expression of bonding emerges very clearly in Erasmus’s critical comment in his dedication of ‘The Godly Feast’ in his *Colloquies* (1515), to Peter Gilles:

Friends of the commonplace and homespun sort... have their idea of relationships, like their whole lives, attached to material things: and

¹ Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *De beneficiis*, in *Moral Essays*, ed. John W. Basore (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), I, v. 2.

² Richard Fitzjames, *Sermo die lune in Ebdomada Pasche* (Westminster: Wynkyn de Worde, 1497), sig. e viii^r.

³ The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) gives the first of these meanings as primary, though with complex variants from Old English within the broad concept of the token as symbolic. The second meaning was commonly employed in the sixteenth century, for example in cases where there was need to trust a confidential message, or in circumstances of religious persecution.

⁴ *Here Begynneth the Rule of Seynt Benet*, trans. Richard Fox (London: Richard Pynson, 1517), sig. fiv^r.

if ever they have to face a separation, they favour a frequent exchange of rings, knives, caps and other tokens of the kind, for fear that their affection may cool when intercourse is interrupted...⁵

Erasmus, with true humanist snobbery, proceeds to contrast this with true friendship which can be supported solely by literary exchange. But material tokens in their various forms were a mainstay of both popular and elite gifting patterns, and remained so throughout the sixteenth century. They were often small gifts, accompanying letters or messages, expressing the goodwill of the sender, but frequently also their serious intent to develop the relationship in some way.⁶ It is clear that contemporaries saw the token as a specific subcategory of the gift, more explicitly directed to the signalling of intent than the generic offering, and even better equipped to emphasize the spirit in which the material entity was conveyed. John Bradford, the Marian martyr, used the relationship between the material token and the spirit of giving as a simile for that between the bread of the Eucharist and the grace conveyed by Christ:

When a loving friend... sendeth to thee a token (as, for example, a napkin or such like) I think thou doest not as thou shouldest do, if that with the thing thou considerest not the mind of thy friend that sendeth or giveth thee the thing, and according thereto to esteem and receive it.⁷

The best evidence for popular attitudes to the gift as token derives from marriage litigation. Courtship was one of the few life experiences that involved gift-giving for all but the poorest individuals, and with the modest offerings of ordinary men (usually the men) to women, came all the ambiguity of possible promises being made.⁸ When the ecclesiastical courts became involved in cases of broken promise, and were required to judge whether there was a binding contract to marry, the question of gifts given and received was often important. In the Kent cases studied by Diana O'Hara dispute often centred upon whether the offering was a 'free gift', which might be given 'in the way' of, or were tokens of, intent.⁹ The ecclesiastical lawyer Henry Swinburne spelled the matter out clearly: 'love gifts or tokens... as bracelets, chains, jewels, and namely the ring... [might be] used for the very

⁵ Desiderius Erasmus, *Collected Works: Vol 3 Correspondence*, trans. R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 43–4.

⁶ The *OED* here gives a rather narrow definition of the token as expressing affection, and as a keepsake or gift given especially at parting. For discussion on the use of tokens in French correspondence and exchange see Sharon Kettering, 'Gift-giving and Patronage in Early Modern France', *French History* 2: 2 (1988), 137–41.

⁷ John Bradford, *The Writings*, ed. Aubrey Townsend, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Parker Society, 1848–53), i, 93. I am grateful to Andrew Hope for this reference.

⁸ The fullest discussion of these issues is in Diana O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint: Rethinking the Making of Marriage in Tudor England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 57–98. See also Ralph Houlbrooke, 'The Making of Marriage in Mid-Tudor England: Evidence from the Records of Matrimonial Contract Litigation', *Journal of Family History* 10 (1985), 339–52; Peter Rushton, 'The Testament of Gifts: Marriage Tokens and Disputed Contracts in North-East England, 1560–1630', *Folk Life* 24 (1985–6), 25–31; David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 263–6.

⁹ O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint*, 69.

arrabo or assured pledge of a perfect promise'.¹⁰ O'Hara stresses that the courts seem to have paid little attention to the physical nature or value of the offering: even rings or gold that might suggest significant investment were less important than the process of giving and taking, and the perceived intentions of donor and recipient. Helen Throwley and Thomas Mayhew exchanged tokens of various kinds, including sixpenny pieces and a little silver crucifix but, 'apon some falling out between them, the tokens of each were restored'.¹¹ Edmund Hodgson of Cockerton, Durham, insisted that the old groat he had given Margery Wormley was 'upon friendship, but as no token' and hence represented no engagement to marry.¹²

Marriage litigation offers an unusual opportunity to penetrate the meaning of tokens for the general population. More understanding of the attitude of the literate can be deduced from correspondence. Here the gift as token was a routine accompaniment to letters which sought to maintain friendly or familial contacts, or to underline a request. The use of the language of tokens within family contact can often be traced through mercantile correspondence. In 1544, for example, Otwell Johnson wrote to his brother John describing as part of a consignment of goods a pair of knives and a bodkin designated as a token for John's wife.¹³ Half a century later the correspondence of the Herrick family of merchants is replete with gratitude expressed for tokens: small books, handkerchiefs, combs and a girdle sent from London, and food often sent in return.¹⁴ Indeed the Herrick correspondence seems to provide a particularly clear example of the force of Erasmus's observations. Nicholas Herrick's letters to his Leicester family in the 1580s were more often than not accompanied by tokens. In early December 1582 his father thanked him for his 'good tokyns' and for all the tokens lately sent to the family. The next June he expressed gratitude for the particular tokens sent by White the carrier, and for all other tokens. In August John specifically identified a keg of fresh sturgeon sent by the carrier as the token worthy of particular thanks. In 1585, Nicholas sent two boxes he had made and two spice graters as tokens to his parents and sister. The repetitious process was matched by the return gifts to London, especially of the food prepared by Nicholas's mother.¹⁵

The Lisle correspondence of the 1530s, especially the letters between Lady Lisle and her female 'gossips', provide an unrivalled site for evaluating the role of the gift as token. An endless flow of small presents passed between Honor and women of her circle. In August 1536, for example, Sister Anthoinette de Saveuse thanked Lady Lisle for five tokens, sent via her daughter Anne, plus half a dozen gold and

¹⁰ Henry Swinburne, *A Treatise of Spousals, or Matrimonial Contracts* (London: S. Roycroft, 1686), 207–10. But Swinburne was clear that the gift had to be accompanied by words, and the offering made in person.

¹¹ Henry Swinburne, *A Treatise of Spousals, or Matrimonial Contracts*, 77.

¹² James Raine (ed.), *Depositions and Other Ecclesiastical Proceedings from the Courts of Durham* (London: Surtees Society 21, 1845), 285.

¹³ *LP*, XIX: i, 67.

¹⁴ Bodl., Eng. Hist. MS. c. 474.

¹⁵ Bodl., Eng. Hist. MS. c. 474, fos. 71, 74, 77, 85.

silver cramp rings and a gold crown.¹⁶ Lady Ryngley sent Lady Lisle a ring 'as a tokyn that you have both my poor hert and hooll mind', while apologizing that her accompanying gift to Lord Lisle of a handkerchief was so meagre.¹⁷ Lady Lisle sent conserves as gifts, and the indefatigable John Husee, the Lisle's agent, frequently refers to tokens delivered to women of the Court.¹⁸ Cramp rings designed to provide aid in childbirth were favoured tokens, and not only as gifts from women: in 1537 Edward Foxe, Bishop of Hereford, sent Lady Lisle one and a half dozen cramp rings with a promise of a better token by the next messenger.¹⁹

The common uses of the language of tokens—that of a small keepsake or aide memoire, and that of a sign physically validating the word of the donor—were intertwined. The small gifts accompanying the correspondence of the Lisles and others were no doubt appreciated for their own sake, but they also presented (rather than just represented) the mind of the giver. In a culture in which, for example, serving-men personated their master, and men of the Privy Chamber could be sent abroad to present the king's person, the imperfect separation between sign and signifier made the token (however modest) a clear affirmation of the honourable intent of the donor.²⁰ When Anne Boleyn, at Henry VIII's behest, took a tablet of gold from her girdle to send to Wolsey as a token of goodwill, it was clearly the intimacy of the gesture, rather than the worth of the jewel, that was the message of the gift.²¹ At the same time the token could be rhetoricized as a modest gesture, not of great material wealth, and hence much more significant for the mind it displayed than for its intrinsic value. In practice it is impossible to make any general distinction between the value of the token and that of other gifts not so described, and even the process of labelling has its problems. What, for example, were the 'tokens' listed in a Wardrobe document of 1530 that places forty-seven of them in the same category as 234 rings and nine 'puffes of Paris'?²² They are likely to be some form of jewellery of modest value: did they form a separate category because they were gifts, or because they were inherently small things?

Tokens could, of course, be freighted with political meaning, even while they continued to be deprecated as a 'mere' token of goodwill, service, or duty. This was particularly true in a difficult decade like the 1530s when the letters and petitions sent to Thomas Cromwell overflow with the offering of 'tokens'. Again and again Cromwell's correspondents write that the substance they are offering is 'poor', and

¹⁶ *LP*, XI, 336.

¹⁷ TNA, SP 3/13/90.

¹⁸ *LP*, XII: ii, 271–2.

¹⁹ *LP*, XII: ii, 5. Tokens were not, of course, exclusively passed between women, but they seem particularly likely to have used these repeated gestures. On the female networks around Honor Lisle see Barbara Hanawalt, 'Lady Honor Lisle's Networks of Influence', in Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowalski (eds.), *Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 188–212.

²⁰ On this process of personation see David Starkey, 'Intimacy and Innovation: the Rise of the Privy Chamber, 1485–1547', in David Starkey et al. (eds.), *The English Court: from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War* (London: Longman, 1987), 71–118.

²¹ George Cavendish, *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*, ed. Richard R. Sylvester (Oxford: EETS 243, 1959), 120–1.

²² *LP*, IV, 6789. It is possible that the puffs were small scent carriers—a meaning that the term had in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

that they will, or at least would wish to, do better at a later date. A letter from Nicholas West, Bishop of Ely, written in his last sickness in 1533 may be cited as typical, or rather distinctive only in that we know more precisely than usual what the token was. West had to refuse Cromwell's request for the benefice of Cottenham as it was already filled, but offered—'a power tokyn of St Awdrye, wherof ye shalbe suer during yor life, beseeching you not regarde the thing yt self which is but a small thing in regarde of your merit towards me'.²³ The offering from St Etheldreda's shrine—perhaps as so often 'Tawdry' laces—was more likely to have value for the conservative West than for the king's minister, but the assumptions about the disparity between the commodity and its inherent worth in displaying goodwill is important. Significant gifts could also be made to seem small by the use of the language of tokens. When in 1572 the Earl of Northumberland was questioned at Berwick about his relationship with Mary, Queen of Scots, in the prelude to the Northern Rising he insisted that the gifts given him and his wife by the queen were only tokens of small value, trifles subsequently returned, though they included rings and a gold cross.²⁴ Sometimes a token was best rejected for acceptance implied some bond. Sir Francis Walsingham returned the recusant Charles Paget his token in 1582, expressing the view that men of 'contrary dispositions' could not be united in goodwill.²⁵ We will need to return to these and similar exchanges in the context of gifts and power, further to consider the mystification of the gift, or indeed bribe, as a token.

FOOD AS GIFT

However frequently contemporaries might reiterate sentiments about the spirit, not the content, of the gift, they clearly chose their actual offerings with care, considering the suitability of the thing given as well as the process of presentation. This can be explored most systematically in the surviving evidence surrounding one category of gift: that of food.²⁶ Food was the material good most commonly offered as a gift in this period, and also that which passed most easily from the status of a commodity to that of a gift. And it was of its nature the most flexible. At one extreme there were the dramatic entertainments provided for the Court under Elizabeth. When Lord Keeper Egerton entertained Elizabeth at Harefield, Middlesex, in 1602 the bill for wines, foods, and the hire of labourers amounted to £1255, nearly £200 was spent on the erection of a temporary dining room and new ovens, and the overall domestic bill seems to have been in excess of £2000.²⁷ This

²³ TNA, SP1/74, fo. 213.

²⁴ CSPD, *Addenda*, 1566–79, 403.

²⁵ TNA, SP15/27/1, fo. 123'. In a similar refusal of a recusant gift, in 1602 the Bishop of London returned a piece of gold brought by the servant of the Bluett the archpriest: HMC, *Salisbury*, xii, 862.

²⁶ See my discussion in 'Food Gifts, the Household and the Politics of Exchange in Early Modern England', *PP* 199 (2008), 41–70.

²⁷ John Payne Collier (ed.), *The Egerton Papers* (London: Camden Society, os 12, 1840), 340–57. The documents, which survive at the Huntington Library, are complicated by the forgery of a 'Shakespearean' entry by Collier, but this does not seem to affect any of the evidence offered for costs or the list of gift-givers.

great financial burden was partly defrayed by a flood of gifts from the great men of the realm, the lawyers and officials of the central courts, relatives, merchants, and neighbouring gentlemen, who sent venison, wildfowl, lobsters, salmon, trout, oysters, sugar loaves, apricots, and oranges. This behaviour was the prerogative of the rich, but even the poor could give food. The household accounts of Princess Mary, for example, show her rewarding poor women who brought apples and cakes at New Year's Tide in the 1540s and even Henry VIII received pippin apples and warden pears from ordinary subjects.²⁸ Henry Goodcole, preaching at New Year 1620, compared his gift of a sermon with that of the poor cottager or tenant-at-will, who brought a few lemons, oranges, or pippin apples to the lord, and the practice seems to have remained common throughout this period.²⁹

Almost anyone could, in the right circumstances, give food to anyone else. It could express the horizontal bonds of friendship and kin loyalty as effectively as the vertical deference of tenant or subject. Food is recognized in many cultures as a useful tool for the 'little presents', tokens of esteem, deference, or affection, that are the small coin of social bonding. Moreover, since these tokens are consumable their multiplication can readily be justified as a form of continuing dialogue between giver and recipient.³⁰ Lord Burghley advised his son to use gifts as an aide memoire: 'compliment [your patron] with many, yet small, gifts and of little charge'.³¹ There can have been few more deft ways to do this than to offer in person the best of seasonal food, or the latest product of one's own estate or plot.

The giving of food can also construct a bond between giver and receiver, which is different from the generic bonding inherent in all presents. Food offered can link directly to commensality—or can simply symbolize such sharing in giving 'what I have caught/reared/grown' for another to consume.³² And the potentially onerous duty of the recipient to display gratitude is facilitated by the immediate use that can be made of the offering. The gift is consumed as an expression of gratitude, and what is left as residuum is the awareness of community, but often also the affirmation of hierarchy. Food is a foundational offering, set apart from others because of its association with commensality, hospitality and the relief of need.³³ One context in which both the expression of gratitude through use, and the residual affirmation of community are well displayed are those occasions when a gentle or noble patron gave a stag or buck to an urban corporation or a

²⁸ Frederic Madden (ed.), *Privy Purse Expenses of the Princess Mary* (London: W. Pickering, 1831), 9–10. Henry VIII's early household book includes rewards for modest gifts of this kind at each New Year: BL, Add. MS. 21481, fos. 20^v, 50^r, 78^r, 280^r.

²⁹ Henry Goodcole, *The Prodigal's Tears. With a Heavenly New Yeeres Gift sent to the Soule* (London: B. A. for I. Browne, 1620), fo. A6^v.

³⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 7–8, for the use of these multiplied food gestures in Algerian culture.

³¹ Francis Peck (ed.), *Desiderata Curiosa: or, a Collection of Divers Scarce and Curious Pieces (Relating Chiefly to Matters of English History)*, 2 vols. (London: private print, 1779), i, 49.

³² Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

³³ Helmuth Berking, *A Sociology of Giving* (London: Sage, 1999), 71ff, argues that to give food is to follow the primitive practice of dividing the sacrifice, acknowledging the creditworthiness of individual members of a group through presents. While this seems far removed from the experience

guild. The group would be assembled for a feast (often specially called in honour of the gift) and would all participate in their sponsor's largesse. The venison here served a diversity of purposes: affirming the deferential bond between lord and corporation, justifying commensality restricted to a group and therefore underlining their identity, and no doubt also emphasizing hierarchy within the consuming group.

Food, like other gifts, was determined by its biography: the sentiment, not the object, established the nature of the exchange. But the gift register led contemporaries to assume that certain foods were more appropriate to this form of exchange than others. When Gervase Holles described the life of his Tudor ancestor, Sir William, he dwelt upon his great hospitality and the standing he possessed in his county. He was so beloved of his neighbours that 'he would often say that the whole country was his garden: for if there was anything in it rare or delicate he was sure to have it presented to him'.³⁴ Much of the array of information on gifts provided by noble and gentry household accounts fits this model of neighbours and kin sending unusual commodities. The Compton Verney accounts for 1562–3 show a fairly modest gentry household in which luxuries such as teal, snipes, plovers, and herons are supplied by 'my cousin Conway', 'my brother Lucy', 'my cousin Chamberlain', and Mr Edmund Petre, all part of their family circle.³⁵ Bess of Hardwick was provided with peas and artichokes, pheasants, trout, pigeons, moorhens, strawberries, apricots, and shrimps by her extended kin, and it was rarely more than a month between her payments of rewards to their servants bringing tempting gifts. In the Gorhambury household of the sixth Earl of Sussex in August and September 1638, the steward took in plums and peaches from Lady Jennings, partridges from her husband, grapes from Lady Winwood, fish from Sir William Fitch, and peaches from Lord Carey.³⁶

The giving of the rare and the highly seasonal was also a valuable way of displaying deference to the great. The Lisles were acutely aware of the desirability of this behaviour: they famously provided fat quails for Jane Seymour when she was pregnant, and an unwanted porpoise for the Lord Admiral. In May 1539, John Husee told Lady Lisle to send no more peascods, for they had lost the race to present the first of the season to the king who had accepted some from the Frenchman's garden in Southwark.³⁷ A century later Archbishop Laud's household accounts show a number of his prelates to have been regular givers, of wine, venison, and fruit, though they could not compete with the luxuries offered by the East India

of early modern England, the culture does retain a preoccupation with expressing creditworthiness through food.

³⁴ Gervase Holles, *Memorials of the Holles Family, 1493–1656*, ed. A. C. Wood (London: Camden Society, 3rd ser. 55, 1937), 46.

³⁵ FSL, MS. V.b.107, fos. 12^r, 13^r, 51^v, 68^v.

³⁶ Lionel M. Munby (ed.), *Early Stuart Household Accounts* (Linton, Cambs: Hertfordshire Record Publications 2, 1986), 175–7. Sir John Jennings of Sandridge, Hertfordshire, was later MP for St Albans; Lady Winwood of Ditton, Buckinghamshire, was a friend of the Sussexes; Robert Carey, first Earl of Monmouth, of Denham, Buckinghamshire.

³⁷ LP, XIV: i, 1026. Muriel St. Clare Byrne, *The Lisle Letters*, 6 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), v, 493–4.

Company—pepper, nutmeg, and cloves.³⁸ Further down the social system townsmen and tenants supplied the household of the Earl of Oxford in the early sixteenth century with wildfowl, fish such as salmon, oranges, and pomegranates.³⁹ Ordinary tenants interspersed their usual gifts of capons, hens, and pigs with swans, teal, and rabbits. While it is possible to find almost anything consumed in the period somewhere in the household accounts or correspondence referring to food gifts, there are clear patterns in the offerings. It is the absences that are most striking. There is hardly a mention of grain or its products, and little evidence of ale or beer.⁴⁰ Beef is rather more common, but not a routine gift, despite its importance in household consumption.⁴¹ The same may be said of fish, or rather of the saltwater fishes that had to be purchased in large quantities to sustain great households in the first half of our period. The humble vegetable is overlooked, with a few exceptions such as artichokes and peascods, and one memorable reference to cabbages provided for the assize judges at Denbigh.⁴² Even when vegetables were sent they were not always appreciated: in 1582 John Herrick's younger brother, also a John, told him to send no more turnips 'for wee could not eat them'.⁴³

There are also distinct patterns in the foods offered by different social groups. Although ordinary tenants might provide unusual gifts at times, their offerings were overwhelmingly those of capons and meats and their times of giving were linked to the festive cycle, particularly the Christmas season.⁴⁴ Townsmen, whether as members of a corporation, or as individuals, usually presented wine or sugar loaves to their superiors. The city of Canterbury's accounts, which begin as early as the 1480s, show the constant obligation to give presents of food to visiting dignitaries, and recurrent payments for wine, though an eclectic range of edibles, capons, pears, walnuts, cockles, and manchpane that was provided for Wolsey in 1518 had later in the century stabilized into a fairly standard offering of wine and fruit.⁴⁵ Individual townsmen from Guildford regularly gave sugar loaves to Sir William and Sir George More, of Loseley at the New Year. Londoners and other merchants might add spices and overseas luxuries to their tokens. Robert More, a London merchant, writing to Sir William's wife in 1580, discussed the cost of cloth she had ordered, then added that a barrel of olives from Spain was to be sent by his wife to the family in the country.⁴⁶

³⁸ TNA, E101/547/5, fos. 4^v, 5^v, 11^v, 92.

³⁹ Longleat House MSS., Misc. Book 2, fos. 2^r, 4^{r-v}, 8^r, 20^v.

⁴⁰ Though there is a remarkable comment in a letter of thanks from the Queen to the Earl of Hertford, transmitted by Lady Knightly, acknowledging the gift of a good doe, pheasant, and bread: HMC, *Bath*, iv, 159.

⁴¹ An exception is the evidence of gifts given to Wolsey in just one month of 1529, which include fourteen 'beeves', mainly from monastic houses: *LP*, IV: iii, 2546. Veal was a more common offering.

⁴² NLW, Wynn of Gwydir MS., 410.

⁴³ Bodl, Eng. Hist. MS. c. 474, fo. 169.

⁴⁴ The seasonal cycle and giving to the judges are discussed in the following chapter.

⁴⁵ HMC 9th Report, Appendix 1, 145–55. The exception was the offerings made at the return of Cardinal Pole and Lord Chancellor Gardiner on their return from peace negotiations in 1555: they were given a full range of meats and fruits and a great porpoise.

⁴⁶ FSL, MS. L.b.36. The exchange between George Saunders and his brother-in-law, Richard Bagot, in 1568, is another good example of the shift from commercial to gift register: cloth is traded

Women played a significant part in the dissemination of food gifts. Their roles in horticulture, stock rearing, and above all dairying provided specific opportunities for exchange. Mothers such as Mrs Herrick were understandably eager to ensure that sons who lived in 'the great wen' should benefit from country cheeses and gammon.⁴⁷ Women exchanged fruit and favoured garden produce. In the Sherfield correspondence of the early seventeenth century there is a note of thanks from Edward Windsor to Sherfield for his wife's offer of a rose bush.⁴⁸ Viscount Lisle, writing to the Earl of Salisbury in 1606 refused to take any credit for the 100 apri-cots that his wife had sent 'of her own garden'.⁴⁹ And women were as likely as men to express tenurial deference through gifts, though they perhaps gave with more ease to other women than to men. The dry accounts of Katherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk, make a very precise point that her tenant Elizabeth Bourne brought her a 'new yeares gift of cakes and apples' in 1562. Jane Smith made Lady Katherine Paston the target of repeated gifts of cake, though she assured her that her gestures were not intended to seek undue favour.⁵⁰

Jane was wise to make the point: women's gifts like men's were often tactical. In a fascinating passage in his *Dialogue of the State of a Christian Man*, William Perkins considers how a good Christian should handle a hard-hearted and exploitative landlord. He suggests that he should offer gifts 'now and then a capon, now a pigge, now a goose' and encourage his wife to visit the landlady 'with spiced cakes, with apples, pears, cherries and such like'.⁵¹ The relationship between landlord and tenant was of its nature asymmetrical, and while apparent generosity of Perkins's kind might uphold hierarchy it could not force the lord into fair treatment. Food gifts could, said Edward Panton half a century later, be construed as bribes or 'kitchin fines', produced because the tenant had been brow-beaten into producing an ox or a sheep. Far better, he advised his readers, to deal justly with tenants in the first instance and to avoid soliciting gifts.⁵²

Patterns of food offering are usually readily explicable. Yet some absences are curiosities: the acceptability of apples, pears, and cakes, but rarely vegetables, as gifts of the poor, is intriguing. The relative silence on grain and its products suggests a sense that the gift has to be distinctive, in some measure marked out from the quotidian pattern of household consumption. Hence the abundance of wild-fowl, luxury freshwater fish like salmon, or saltwater curiosities like porpoise, in many lists. The food gift might not make much financial impact on the lord's

between the two, and Saunders asks that 'all can be made even' at their next meeting, but he also sends a sugar loaf to his cousin, and a thread and needles to his cousin: FSL, MS. L.a.777.

⁴⁷ Bodl., Eng. Hist. MS. c. 474, fos. 153r, 171r.

⁴⁸ HRO, MS. 44 M 69/30/34.

⁴⁹ HMC, *Salisbury*, xviii, 108.

⁵⁰ Lincoln Archive Office, MS. 1 ANC 7/A2, fo. 51v. *The Correspondence of Lady Katherine Paston* ed. Ruth Hughey, (Norwich: Norfolk Record Society 14, 1941), 62. For a good example of women managing this sort of rural reciprocity see Jane Whittle and Elizabeth Griffiths, *Consumption and Gender in the Early Seventeenth-Century Household. The World of Alice Le Strange* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁵¹ William Perkins, *Workes* (Cambridge: John Legate, 1603), 472.

⁵² Edward Panton, *Speculum Iuuentutis: or, a True Mirror where the Errors in Breeding Noble and Generous Youth...Are...Manifest* (London: Charles Smith & Thomas Burrell, 1671), 302.

table: it should, however, possess a particularity that ideally reminded the recipient of the giver and generated the proper forms of gratitude. This required labelling, since no food was automatically gift-ascribed, but the cultural signals were in place for some to be thought more inherently gift-like than others.⁵³

Only one form of food gift approximated to being culturally determined: venison. It is venison that also appears most regularly in correspondence about food-giving. The deer parks of the nobility and greater gentry provided one of the most defining aspects of their status. From the first Game Law of 1389–90 the aristocracy strove with increasing determination to protect their monopolistic claims to the hunt. And, although disparking gathered momentum in the seventeenth century, the ability to hunt remained a necessary adjunct of elite power.⁵⁴ This is reflected again and again in the pattern of food offerings. Gifts of bucks, does, fawns, haunches of venison, and the endless pasties dominate many of the reward lists that household officers recorded. And thanks for stags, bucks, and hinds pepper letter collections such as those of the Talbots, Sidneys, and Mannors. Few give much detail of the gift, though a charming letter from the ninth Earl of Northumberland to George More apologizes for giving only half a fawn, the rest having been eaten by ‘my great bellied woman’, but pointing out that his great grandfather had given similar gifts to the kings of England out of Petworth’s grounds.⁵⁵

Venison was marked by its prestige and its ability to confer a measure of honour on the recipient. For example, the accounts of Prior William More of Worcester in the early years of Henry VIII regularly mention food gifts, the servants who brought them being given a small reward. He rarely recorded what they brought: the exception is venison. Payments of 12d or 16d to the servants of Mr Brewton, Mr Swinnerton, Mr Dingley, and others are carefully flagged. The arrival of a large carcass no doubt caused some stir: equally the giver had to be registered.⁵⁶ Importance of another kind can be shown by the status of those often involved. Sir William Cavendish received his venison from the Earl of Huntingdon and the Duke of Suffolk in 1552. The ninth Earl of Northumberland rewarded servants of the Earl of Sussex, the Earl of Shrewsbury, Lord Lumley, Sir Thomas Cecil, and Sir Francis Carew for bringing venison in 1585–6. When the fifth Earl of Huntingdon visited Bath in 1627 he was welcomed with gestures of incorporation—venison—by the

⁵³ Note the contrast here with the pattern revealed for the earlier medieval period in Christopher Woolgar’s study of three East Anglian households of the fourteenth century. No gifts of venison were recorded, indeed it is not mentioned in any of the accounts, and, beyond the ubiquitous capons, the most common offerings were swans and fish, including salted herring: ‘Diet and Consumption in Gentry and Noble Households: a Case-Study from Around the Wash’, in Rowena Archer and Simon Walker (eds.), *Rulers and Ruled in Late Medieval England* (Hambledon: Hambledon Press, 1995), 17–31.

⁵⁴ Roger B. Manning, *Hunters and Poachers: a Cultural and Social History of Unlawful Hunting in England, 1485–1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), esp. chapters 1 and 5. For a good example of the status importance of the park, but also of the difficulty of maintaining it in the mid-seventeenth century, see Sir Edward Dering’s remembrancer book for his Kentish estates: FSL, MS. V.b.296.

⁵⁵ SHC, MS. 6729/2/53.

⁵⁶ *The Journal of Prior William More*, ed. Ethel S. Fegan (London: Worcestershire Record Society, 1914).

Earl of Suffolk and the Earl of Worcester.⁵⁷ Contacts among friends and extended kin were regularly cemented by the offering of game: for example the earls of Rutland provided an extraordinary flow of venison to their courtier-kinsman Sir Roger Manners.⁵⁸ This last example is one of many in which venison was regularly sent to London: the Earl of Cumberland and the Duke of Buckingham were busy doing so in the first decades of the sixteenth century, Bess of Hardwick was carefully organizing dissemination of pasties at its last decades, and Sir Ralph Verney was still despatching haunches at the end of the seventeenth century.⁵⁹

Venison had the merit of closer identity with the honourable status of the giver than any other food. This ensured that it had a particularly rich role in the repertoire of exchange. It could be a reward for dependents, especially a powerful gesture in the cycle of local reciprocity. The chance survival of two accounts by the deer-keeper of the Duke of Norfolk's Framlingham Park for 1508–13 and 1515–19 shows the sheer scale such giving could attain. Between 100 and 200 deer were offered to dependents, local gentry, and churchmen. Many were regular recipients: the customary offerings presumably strengthening the Howards' patronage networks.⁶⁰ The sixth Earl of Shrewsbury's clerk of the kitchen also often distributed parts of does to those who were regular donors to the household.⁶¹ The seventeen bucks noted as distributed by the Earl of Rutland in 1588 from Helmsley Park, Yorkshire, went to local men such as Sir William Fairfax, senior servants Lancelot Turner, and kin like Sir George Chaworth, who was an active agent for the Manners.⁶² In these and in many other cases the gift of venison spoke to the maintenance of bonds in local society. The object might be reward to those who had no access to game. But a principle of redundancy can also be found: Prior More, for example, had well-stocked parkland, and no need to be given bucks and does.⁶³ The gift was essentially a recognition of the ability of the lord to offer, and of his dependent or neighbour being of sufficient honour to receive, such a food. This is shown in a distinctive way by the behaviour of the wardens of the London livery companies—no owners of parks—who gained venison and gave it to their inferiors in pasties as a means of demonstrating their worshipful status.⁶⁴ In a

⁵⁷ Chatsworth Estate Trust, MS. Hardwick Bk 1; Alnwick Castle, MS. U.I.1,– Pursebearer's account 1585–6. HHL, Hastings MSS, HAF Box 8/32.

⁵⁸ HMC, *Rutland*, i, 115, 149, 224, 325, 329.

⁵⁹ *Clifford Letters of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Arthur Geoffrey Dickens (London: Surtees Society 172, 1962), 106–7; Staffordshire Record Office, MS. D1721/1/5, fo. 91. Chatsworth Estate Trust MSS, Hardwick Bk 8; see also Bk 7, fo. 105^r for the cost of transporting forty red deer pies to London. Susan Whyman, *Sociability and Power in Late-Stuart England: the Cultural Worlds of the Verneys 1660–1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 23–7.

⁶⁰ BL, Add. MS. 27451, fos. 11^r–25^r; Add. Charters 16554; Add. Roll 17745. For an analysis of the documents, showing that obligation to the neighbourhood often transcended specific political loyalties see Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 56–7.

⁶¹ BL, Harl. MS 4782, fos. 124^v, 134^v, 138^v, 140^v, 162^v, 169^v, 173^v, 175^v.

⁶² HMC, *Rutland*, i, 267. For the identity of the recipients see HMC, *Rutland*, iv, 394.

⁶³ *Journal of Prior More*, 150, 342.

⁶⁴ Ian Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 117.

characteristic example from 1556 the Marquis of Winchester gave the fee-buck to which he was entitled from Nonsuch Park to the Grocers' Company.⁶⁵

The offering of prestige foods also illuminates a more general aspect of giving. In certain circumstances it was entirely appropriate for a noble or gentleman to solicit presents. Asking would seem to transform an ostensibly voluntary act of donation into a forced prestation.⁶⁶ Contemporaries were aware that this was a delicate issue: there were clear parameters about what was culturally acceptable. For example, Robert Losse was constantly asking his 'dere frend' Sir William More for venison in the 1570s, and the grovelling tone of his letters indicates that he came close to the dishonourable behaviour of begging.⁶⁷ But the principle of asking for food in support of specific enterprises, or simply for the sake of friendship, was an acceptable feature of the community of honour. The most public occasions on which nobles and gentlemen turned to their neighbours and kin were the assizes, major public feasts, and royal progresses. Sir Francis Bacon showed a typically exaggerated awareness of what was expected when, in 1613, he feasted the whole of the University of Cambridge and, said Chamberlain, 'hath sent warrants to his frends and acquaintances far and neere to furnish him with venison to bestow on the colleges'.⁶⁸

The most common pattern of 'ask' was more individual, an appeal for a portion of venison, or whole animal, to 'make merry withal' and especially to entertain 'good friends' and maintain honour. Clement Paston of Oxnead, Norfolk, asked the steward of Rising Chase for bucks on several occasions, including for the assizes during his year as sheriff, but his most telling letter was written in 1596, when he was planning a grand entertainment for Attorney-General Coke and others, and badly needed a buck. He had, he observed, worn out his friends with his previous 'asks' so must now turn once again to Mr Buxton the steward.⁶⁹ Sometimes third parties intervened in the asking process: Sir Thomas Walsingham, for example, requested a buck from Sir Edward Stradling, because his 'friend' Dr Aubrey needed one to 'make merry'.⁷⁰ This was an extension of a common pattern of largesse in which the Crown, or a nobleman, might issue a warrant to hunt and take one or two deer in a specified park as a reward for services rendered.⁷¹ To be able to request a 'free gift' was taken as a significant sign of friendship, patronage, or affinity: and once again food which was seasonal, cyclical, and perishable, provided the ideal form of tangible benefit.

⁶⁵ Alfred John Kempe (ed.), *The Loseley Manuscripts* (Guildford: Loseley House, 1835), 160.

⁶⁶ Berking, *Sociology of Giving*, 24, argues that the need to ask favours is experienced as a 'resource deficit', and their giving created in the recipient gratitude obligations that likely to carry connotations of social inferiority.

⁶⁷ FSL, MSS L.b.599–603, 605. The surviving letters are from 1579–87.

⁶⁸ *Letters of Chamberlain*, i, 493.

⁶⁹ HMC, *Various Collections*, ii, 238–9, 248.

⁷⁰ *The Stradling Correspondence*, ed. John Montgomery Traherne (London: private print, 1840), 26.

⁷¹ A characteristic example is the warrant for delivery of 'a buck of the season' of royal gift from park at Marley to Sir Thomas Heneage of the Privy Chamber in 1539: NLW, Gwysaney Letters, vol. 2, no. 4.

The capacity to ask also suggests elements of commodification, or at least calculation of financial equality, within food exchanges. In some ways the giving of food was explicitly divided from its marketing, and the household accounts kept by the clerks of the kitchen for the great establishments of the realm show a careful separation between food bought and food given. But such separation does not always mean that no market value was assigned to the gift. While some accountants, like one clerk to the ninth Earl of Northumberland, might label presents as 'in charge: nil' since they were consumed within the household, others were careful to place a value on the items received, calculating how much they offset the costs of purchase.⁷² And food could also still be a part of rent, either as straightforward income in kind, or as the customary payments provided at the New Year and other seasons. Even when the latter offerings were mystified as gifts they were usually assigned a financial value by the recording clerks.⁷³

GIVING WORDS

Words defined as gifts were often the most precious of all the presents contemporary donors could provide. Words as dedications in books presented to patrons or friends are the most obvious example. Long before the sixteenth century, or indeed printing, such gifts were an established part of such relationships. But words could also be gifted less formally through letters, poems, and other scribal forms. And running through the various media, embracing oral as well as written communication, was the belief that advice or instruction might be the most important of all.

While none of these ways of perceiving words as gifts was new in the sixteenth century, both printing and growing literacy enhanced their significance. Female correspondents exchanged news and gossip as part of their 'duty' to one another in ways that would have been less feasible in earlier centuries.⁷⁴ Literacy and classical education encouraged the formalization of advice: from parents to children; from counsellors to monarchs; from friends to one another. Books dedicated to particular patrons now offered words to laud the recipient and thereby to expose him or her far more fully to public view than in the past. And religious change also played its part. The extension of preaching under Protestant influence, and the subsequent growth in printing sermons, provided a newish focus for the 'gift' of advice—ethical and spiritual. But this very diversity makes it necessary to be cautious about meaning and intent. The use of gift terminology is readily diluted into metaphoric gesture when individuals were dealing in words. It is important to remember that the perception of the donor and recipient are crucial: do their words and responses indicate that the exchange is seen as one in which gift reference is necessary in some sense to validate the transaction, or at least to enhance its worth?

⁷² *Household Papers of Henry Percy*, xxxiv–xlii; Alnwick Castle, MS, U1.1, Kitchen Roll 1575.

⁷³ See Chapter 3, Seasons for Giving.

⁷⁴ James Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

The most explicit articulation of the word as gift appears in the process of dedicating and presenting books.⁷⁵ Erasmus's bitchy observation about the author Augustus Justinianus is the starting point for Davis's evaluation of the book as gift, and it merits repetition: 'His work being quite unsaleable, he goes to and fro presenting it to men in great position, and so makes more by it than he could across the counter.'⁷⁶ The book was already a commodity and saleable at market, so giving a book away (in whatever form), was an act of supererogation. Erasmus, however, was the last scholar to talk as though acting as a donor and identifying individuals as recipients of the learned text was something to despise. The tone of his subservient dedications to the great can be exemplified in his offering of Plutarch's 'De utilitate capienda ex inimicis' to Wolsey:

I have for a long time hesitated to approach so great a personage with a gift so small, for though encouraged by your goodness yet I was deterred by your greatness. Yet... I ventured by this little present, such as it is, both to express my regard for you and to plead for your favour.⁷⁷

The processes of dedication and donation were alive and flourishing throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, stimulated in part by the humanist values that Erasmus mocked above. Authors sought patrons for obvious financial benefit, for status and reputation in all its forms, and occasionally for political protection. The example of James Aske's fulsome dedication of thanks to Sir Julius Caesar has already been cited, and there are many of a similar kind. John Studley, the translator of Seneca's tragedy *Medea*, presented his work to Francis, Earl of Bedford, saying that his gift 'may argue unto your Lordship a more manifest good will towards your Honour, then yt rich Jewels and somes of gold and silver which wordly minds gratifie their frends withal'.⁷⁸ Henry Peacham dedicated *The Truth of Our Times* (1638) to Mr Henry Barnwell of Terrington, Norfolk, expressing gratitude for support 'the consideration whereof hath moved me to be publicly thankful' offering his little book as 'the pledge of my affection'.⁷⁹ These examples are more characteristic than that of Sir Thomas Elyot who, when he sent Thomas Cromwell one of his treatises—probably *Of the Knowledge whiche Maketh a Wise Man* (1533)—asked his protection against 'those whose minds have such a fever continual, that every good counsel is in

⁷⁵ This is an aspect of gifting that has been given considerable attention by historians and literary specialists. See in particular Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Beyond the Market: Books as Gifts in Sixteenth-Century France', *TRHS*, 5th ser. 33 (1983), 69–88; Jason Scott-Warren, *Sir John Harington and the Book as Gift* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); James P. Carley, *The Books of Henry VIII and his Wives* (London: The British Library, 2004), 53–80; Jane A. Lawson, 'This Remembrance of the New Year': Books Given to Queen Elizabeth as New Year's Gifts', in Peter Beal and Grace Ioppolo (eds.), *Elizabeth I and the Culture of Writing* (London: The British Library, 2007), 133–71.

⁷⁶ Erasmus, *Collected Works*, vol. 6: *Correspondence* (1976), 161.

⁷⁷ Erasmus, *Works*, vol. 2: *Correspondence*, (1974), 275. I am grateful to Andrew Hope for this reference.

⁷⁸ Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *The Seventh Tragedie...Entitled Medea*, trans. John Studley (London: Thomas Cowell, 1566), preface.

⁷⁹ Henry Peacham, *The Truth of Our Times, Revealed out of One Mans Experience* (London: Nicholas Okes for James Becket, 1638), preface.

their taste unsavoury and bitter'.⁸⁰ The book could serve the client–patron relationship in a myriad of ways.

The process of gifting and dedicating a printed book, as against a manuscript designed in the first instance for one pair of eyes, is an ambiguous one. The public gaze interrupts what can be represented as a private offering, and the market and gift registers are intertwined in a highly visible manner.⁸¹ Some authors, notably Ben Jonson, began to make this explicit by dividing prefatory material between dedication to a patron and guidance to the reader: the element of gift becomes bifurcated and the idea of it as partially a commodity enhanced.⁸² Jonson made a positive virtue of this bifurcation, arguing that books are made more valuable as commodities by continuing to be part of the gift register. This would seem to be the logic followed by most writers at least until the Restoration period.⁸³ Books would still be presented to the monarch on bended knee, and the language of dedications could still deprecate the offering while praising the patron. John Studley is typical in commenting on his 'simple, rude and unskilful pen' while praising the ability of the Earl of Bedford, to esteem a true gift that offers delectation to the mind. Writers asked patrons and friends to nurture their 'small' gifts: Spenser, in one of his dedicatory sonnets to the 1590 edition of *Faerie Queene*, offers his 'small guift' to Lord Grey the 'patrone of my Muses pupillage'.⁸⁴ But Renaissance views of authorship were by this time converting the emphasis on the modesty of the gift into a rhetorical strategy: the poet as donor was in practice a maker of a great gift. When immortality could be conferred through the gift of a sonnet the recipient became in practice a foil for the creativity of the donor.⁸⁵

Literary gifts, extended in definition to include manuscript circulation and correspondence, also responded to humanist rethinking of ideas of friendship. Erasmus's dismissal of tokens passed among ordinary men to reinforce amity and maintain contact proceeds to an affirmation of the meeting of minds. The aim, he told Peter Gilles, is that the loss of bonding caused by the separation of friends should be made good by literary means, and so he sent a present: 'no common present for you are no common friend, but many jewels in one small book'.⁸⁶ The double-portrait of Erasmus and Gilles, sent to Thomas More in 1517, focuses this

⁸⁰ *LP*, VI, 1.

⁸¹ Scott-Warren, *Sir John Harington*, 4–18. Scott-Warren takes the ambivalent case of James I's *Basiliikon Doron*, at once private for his son and self-consciously public, to challenge Davis's assumption that print necessarily leads to the book becoming communal property.

⁸² Jonson's views on gifts are discussed by Alison V. Scott, *Selfish Gifts. The Politics of Exchange and English Courtly Literature 1580-1628* (Madison, WI: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), 137–47.

⁸³ See, for example, the case of history books, evaluated by Daniel Woolf. Patronage and personal support for this form of writing was at its greatest between the 1580s and the Civil War: Daniel R. Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 249–51.

⁸⁴ Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, I–III: Dedicatory Sonnet X. There are in all thirteen dedicatory sonnets, as well as the prefatory letter to Sir Walter Raleigh.

⁸⁵ Scott, *Selfish Gifts*, 13–43; Lorna Hutson, *The Usurer's Daughter: Male Friendship and Fictions of Women in Sixteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 1994), 2 ff.

⁸⁶ Erasmus, *Works*, vol. 3: *Correspondence* (1976), 44.

literary friendship and includes More within it with Gilles's gesture to the book of *Utopia*, and the letter of More's he holds in his hand.⁸⁷ And Erasmus's vast correspondence with the humanist international could all be interpreted as exchange affirming identity, replete with the language of gratitude for benefits received (as well as hostility to those who were intellectually or otherwise ungrateful). From these exchanges of the early sixteenth century grew a pattern of communication that was defined by a measure of intellectual equality and a mutuality of interest that fitted well into the gift register. It even migrated between the conceptual and physical offering. The gift of correspondence was partly that of the use of handwriting, the giving of one's own hand to pen a letter, a task once the normal prerogative of the professional scribe.⁸⁸

The book, letter, or manuscript could also become the focus of gift-giving because of the care taken with its handwork. Illuminated manuscripts given to the monarchs were the most precious of these material objects: a tradition perpetuated into the early seventeenth century by the royal gift books of the calligrapher Esther Inglis (see Figure 2.1).

In modest echo of these performances were the careful gift-texts and letters written out by children to assure parents of their skills. The significance of the content was equally variable, but all shared the characteristic identified by Lisa Klein, of an offering of the hand that expressed the spirit of the giver through labour.⁸⁹ These labours of love appear most common in asymmetrical exchange, underlining the deference of the giver, a deference which in some circumstances, for example those of the child, could not be matched by the affluence of the material gift. And for that reason also it seems that women were disproportionately engaged in these ways of presentation. There are, however, a few remarkable examples of men whose carefully honed gifting of books and manuscripts served to articulate their whole political and ideological understanding of their culture. Lord Morley gave regularly at the Henrician and Marian Courts; Sir John Harington at those of Elizabeth and James I.⁹⁰

One remarkable giver of books needs a special mention along with these last savants. Matthew Parker, as Archbishop of Canterbury, elevated the giving of the book to an art form: establishing a close relationship with the printer John Day, funding the printing of books at Lambeth, and binding and decorating his gift

⁸⁷ Lisa Jardine, *Erasmus, Man of Letters: the Construction of Charisma in Print* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 31–4.

⁸⁸ Alan Bray, *The Friend* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003), 161–4.

⁸⁹ Georgianna Ziegler, 'More than Feminine Boldness': the Gift books of Esther Inglis', in Mary E. Burke, Jane Donawerth, Linda L. Dove, and Karen Nelson (eds.), *Women, Writing and the Reproduction of Culture in Tudor and Stuart Britain* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 19–37; Lisa M. Klein, 'Your Humble Handmaid: Elizabethan Gifts of Needlework', *Renaissance Quarterly* 50 (1997), 459–93.

⁹⁰ Carley *Books of Henry VIII*, 61–4, 84–6, and also his account of Lord Morley's gift MSS, 'The Writings of Henry Parker, Lord Morley: A Bibliographical Survey', in Marie Axton and James P. Carley (eds.), *'Triumphs of English': Henry Parker, Lord Morley, Translator to the Tudor Court* (London: The British Library, 2000), 27–68; Scott-Warren, *Sir John Harington*; Gerard Kilroy, 'Sir John Harington's Protesting Catholic Gifts', *The Downside Review* 122: 426 (January, 2004), 19–42.



Fig. 2.1 Esther Inglis. Frontispiece of her transcriptions of the Psalms of David, presented to Elizabeth I.

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texts in the elegant styles approved by the queen.⁹¹ Although his own history of the archbishops of Canterbury was one of the productions of Day's press, Parker was concerned not with patronage for himself, but for the fledgling Church of England. He is well known to have sponsored work on the antiquity of his Church: on occasions he also entered the lists against Catholic polemics. When Elizabeth visited

⁹¹ Elizabeth Evenden, *Patents, Pictures and Patronage: John Day and the Tudor Book Trade* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 105–17. See also Felicity Heal, 'The Bishops and the Printers: Henry VII to Elizabeth', in Martin Heale (ed.), *The Prelate in England and Europe, 1300–1560* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2014), 144–5.

Canterbury in 1573 he distributed copies of *De visibili Rom'anarchia*, whose author George Ackworth he had supported, to the nobles and councillors present.⁹² This was direct propaganda: when he wished to use the book as a more subtle tool of persuasion, Parker gave his beautifully illustrated and bound copies of *The Bishops' Bible*, Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, *Christian Prayers and Meditations*, and his own *De Antiquitate Britannicae Ecclesiae*, to Elizabeth, William Cecil, and the Earl of Leicester. The relatively common donation of a book was rendered precious and great by its personal, ideological, and aesthetic qualities.⁹³

Gifts of words are clearly identifiable in presentations of books, whether printed or in manuscript. Within this category poems are a particularly important subset of things represented and presented as gifts. One striking example, combining verse and donation, is the manuscript dedication of Philip and Mary Sidney's translations of the Psalms to Elizabeth I:

But he [Philip] did warp, I [Mary] weav'd this webb to end:
The stuff not ours, our work no curious thing,

...

And I [Mary] the cloth in both our names present,
A livery robe to be bestowed by thee.⁹⁴ ll. 27–9, 33–4.

George Herbert returned a poetic gift of a sonnet on 'Aethiopisse' to Lord Chancellor Bacon, who had proffered him a jewel, playing with the themes of light and darkness:

My Lord, a Diamond to mee you sent,
And I to you a Blackamoore present.
Gifts speake the givers, for as those refractions,
Shining and sharpe, point out your rare perfections:
So by the other you may read in mee,
Whose Scholler's habits and obscurity
Hath soyld with black, the color of my state,
Till your bright gift my darknes did abate.⁹⁵

The giving of a poem in this and many examples was an obvious part of a system of exchange within which the cultural élite operated. The poem exists at the highly self-aware, and self-fashioning, end of the spectrum of words that could be gifted.

Letters, and the written communication of news, were less formal aspects of exchange, though ones that were obviously of growing significance in this period. Can they also be seen as forms of the gift? ⁹⁶ Elements of gifting are certainly visible

⁹² Nichols, *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth I*, ii, 79. The book against which Ackworth wrote was Nicholas Sander's *De Visibili Monarchia Ecclesia* (Louvain: John Fowler, 1571); Vivienne Sanders, 'The Household of Archbishop Parker and the Influencing of Public Opinion', *JEH* 34 (1988), 534–47.

⁹³ See, in particular, Elizabeth's surviving copy of *De Antiquitate Britannicae Ecclesiae et Privilegiis Ecclesiae Cantuariensis* (London: John Day, 1572): BL, shelfmark C.24. b. 8.

⁹⁴ *The Sidney Salter: the Psalms of Sir Philip and Mary Sidney*, ed. Hannibal Hamlin, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 5–6. For a discussion of this see, Jane Donawerth, 'Women's Poetry and the Tudor-Stuart System of Gift-Exchange', in Donawerth, et al., *Women and Reproduction of Culture*, 3–18.

⁹⁵ *Complete Works in Verse and Prose of George Herbert*, ed. Alexander Grossart, 3 vols. (London: 1874), ii, 164.

⁹⁶ Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers*, 159–65.

in personal correspondence—the duty to respond, the calibration of affection through words, the labour that was often expended in the physical process of writing, and of course the fact that the letter often accompanied and explained another material present. Even in the Greek world Demetrius had defined a letter as a piece of writing ‘sent to someone as a kind of gift’.⁹⁷ Letters could be ‘tokens’, as in the comment of Elizabeth Bourne to Sir John Conway asking him to accept her note as a ‘token of remembrance’.⁹⁸ The Earl of Leicester thanked the Earl of Rutland for a ‘frendly letter of the new year’, which pleased him more than a material gift.⁹⁹

However, contemporaries only occasionally chose to express the idea of gifting with any specificity in their letters, or in the dissemination of news. Erasmus, as ever, suggested that one explanation might be that words separated from material benefit could be thought deficient. Having received golden gifts from the Polish Chancellor for the dedication of one of his books, he responded that he was grateful for something tangible ‘for I imagine there are people who will argue that a compliment paid in a letter means little’.¹⁰⁰ The circumstances in which compliment and information might be valued more highly than Erasmus suggests were often those of geographical or cultural isolation. When the impoverished Thomas Nashe wrote a gossip letter to William Cotton in the country it is implied that he is offering ‘a gift which [he] hopes will elicit some return’.¹⁰¹ Bess of Hardwick expected the gift of news from her step-son Gilbert Talbot, who duly rewarded her with information on his travels with ‘suche newes as on the Quenes hye ways we have mett’.¹⁰² The early Stuart ‘novellante’ Joseph Mead of Cambridge at times explicitly defined the news he was circulating to his gentry contacts in gift-giving language.¹⁰³ In the later seventeenth century John Verney thought of his London news sent to his father Sir Ralph in the country as a gift.¹⁰⁴ In each case, as in that of the women who presented news and gossip, the written word was accorded a particularly distinctive status, and valued in part because it conveyed ideas and sentiment that set it apart from any notion of commodity. It was also usually passed from inferiors to superiors, and hence couched in a language of deference.

Advice literature, which was a growing genre in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, could move either up or down the social order. Its political significance, in which it was usually addressed to superiors, is considered in a later chapter. Here we should just note its form as advice from parents to children, especially fathers to sons. Before the Civil War it was rarely identified in explicitly ‘gifty’

⁹⁷ Quoted in David Randall, ‘Joseph Mead, Novellante: News Sociability and Credibility in Early Stuart England’, *JBS* 45 (2006), 304.

⁹⁸ BL, Add. MS. 23212, fo. 94.

⁹⁹ HMC, *Rutland*, i, 157.

¹⁰⁰ Erasmus, *Works*, vol 12: *Correspondence*, 359.

¹⁰¹ *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. R. B. McKerrow, 5 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), v, 195–6; Charles Nicholls, *A Cup of News: The Life of Thomas Nashe* (London: Routledge, 1984), 239.

¹⁰² FSL, MS. X. d. 428 (114).

¹⁰³ Randall, ‘Joseph Mead’, 295. Captain Weddell made the best of a sorry tale by sending Buckingham’s secretary, Edward Nicholas, the offering of news of the fleet’s failure to relieve La Rochelle in 1628: BL, Egerton MS., fo. 49r.

¹⁰⁴ Whyman, *Sociability and Power*, 17.

terms: fathers clearly thought that stern admonitions, instructions, and directions were more appropriate forms of labelling. But occasionally warmer sentiment shows through the stern precepts. Patrick Scot, whose *Omnibus and Singulis* (1619) was one of the earliest of this form of literature to reach print, asked his son 'to receive it with such a heart as I give it you', urging him to remember that his 'learning and observation', based on his father's guidance must bear fruit throughout his life.¹⁰⁵ In this Scot followed closely the 'princely gift' or *Basilikon Doron*, that James VI and I gave to his heir, offering Prince Henry 'the fruites of that blessing which here from my hart I bestow upon you'.¹⁰⁶ In other texts parental blessing, the gift sanctioned by divine grace, also served to mitigate the stern, and often premonitory, guidance to descendants.¹⁰⁷

RICH GIFTS

The example of James VI's influential gift to his son shows how in the appropriate circumstances, given the proper biography, almost any of the gifts already discussed could be defined as great. The commitment, will, and capacity of the donor, the honourable nature of the recipient, or the manner in which the present was given, might weigh more heavily in the calculus of exchange than any financial benefit. Philip Chowte, Captain of Camber Castle, Sussex, gave Robert Dudley a sapphire ring: 'King Henrye the eight wore it is a ring'.¹⁰⁸ Bishop Sandys's gift of a clock to Sir William Cecil at New Year in 1564 no doubt had some limited monetary value, but the timepiece was marked out by its lineage. It had belonged to 'your olde master of happy memorie King Edward' who gave it to Sir John Cheke, who in turn passed it to Sandys. Such a descent valorized the gift and allowed the bishop to excuse his inability to send more in monetary terms because of the 'barrenes of this contrie'.¹⁰⁹ Alexander Nowell, Dean of St Paul's, adopted a similar

¹⁰⁵ Patrick Scot, *Omnibus and Singulis: Affording Matter Profitable for All Men* (London: W. Stansby, 1619), preface.

¹⁰⁶ James VI and I, *Basilikon Doron*, ed. James Craigie, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society 3rd ser. 16, 18: 1944–50). i, 1. On the dissemination of the text see, James VI and I, *Basilikon Doron*, ii, 2.

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, the popular book of Dorothy Leigh's *The Mother's Blessing: or the Godly Counsaile of a Gentle-woman not Long Since Deceased* (London: for Thomas Budge, 1616), which remained in print with numerous editions throughout the seventeenth century. Printed advice literature at the end of the century and beyond was more likely to be expressed formally as gift than these early examples. See Chapter 3, Seasons for Giving.

¹⁰⁸ HMC, *Bath*, v, 167.

¹⁰⁹ Henry Ellis (ed.), *Original Letters Illustrative of English History*, ser. 1, 3 vols. (London: Harding, Triphook & Leppard, 1824), ii, 195. The language of barrenness or bareness is often used in relation to the giving of food, partly no doubt as pragmatic excuse for any deficiency in the gift, but also to dramatize the sacrifice that it represents, and therefore to enhance the nature of the benefit being given. See, for example, Sir Edward Winter to Robert Cecil, in November 1595, sending red deer pasties 'such as the barrenness of the country and unskilful workmanship yields', or the aldermen of Worcester sending him six cheeses 'from this barren country' in 1597: HMC, *Salisbury*, v, 479; vii, 96.

strategy in sending Sir Michael Hicks, Burghley's patronage secretary, a statue of Edward VI.¹¹⁰ The provenance of a book could transform its essential value: one of the Fyton family recorded in a fifteenth-century primer that it had been given by Lord Burghley to the Earl of Northumberland in 1574, and by him to Sir Edward Fyton who had passed it down in his family.¹¹¹ As we have seen, the personal labour which went in to the construction of the gift was also a means of fructifying and enlarging the exchange. And, as might be expected, the least material gifts—the words of the poem, the advice from father to son—could be claimed to have a value attached to them which was literally priceless. In each case the gift had been given a powerful biography, isolating it from any taint of commodification.

One of the commonest ways of making the small token large can be seen by looking again at the giving of food. Prestige food stuffs, especially venison, could be turned into portable gifts, as baked pasties. These were the offerings of choice made between families who lived at a distance from one another, and above all were the way in which game was transported to London and the Court. Great thought seems to have been given to the preparation and dissemination of pasties. The Duke of Buckingham had a series of lamprey pies baked in 1508, and arranged that they were sent to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chamberlain, and the Steward of the Royal Household, and later, Messrs Empson and Dudley.¹¹² A few years later, Henry Percy, heir to the Northumberland title, distributed a set of venison pasties for his friend the first Earl of Cumberland, who was out of favour with Cardinal Wolsey. Ten were given to the cardinal, two to Henry's father, who was currently hostile to Cumberland, two went to the Lord Chamberlain 'wo ys wery gret with my Lord', four went to other members of the Percy household, and the last two 'I was so bold apou yow that I gayff them to the Popes embassitor'.¹¹³

The papacy was more directly involved in a famous story told by John Foxe of the young Thomas Cromwell's successful bid at Rome to renew the pardon privileges of the Boston Guild. Aware of the need for douceurs and the difficulty of access to Julius II, Cromwell heard of his sweet tooth and prepared 'certeine fine dishes of gelly' that were unknown in Italy. Julius's attention was attracted by a part-song by three Englishmen, and Cromwell and his jellies were allowed into the presence. There he made the small gift large, claiming these were foods 'such as kynges and princes onely . . . in the Realme of England use to feede upon'. Julius was charmed and, after insisting on the recipe, granted the valuable pardons.¹¹⁴ The detailed narrative cannot be verified beyond Foxe, but Cromwell did win the major concessions for his employers, and the form of giving described carries cultural conviction.¹¹⁵

While modest gifts could be enhanced by careful strategy in giving, their material value was inescapably limited. Even the repeated offerings of food, and the

¹¹⁰ BL, Lans. MS. 75, fo. 30r.

¹¹¹ NLW, Gwysaney MSS., Calendar, no. 18.

¹¹² Stafford Record Office. D1721/1/5, fo. 91r.

¹¹³ *Clifford Letters*, 106–7.

¹¹⁴ John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments of Matters Most Speciall and Memorable, Happenyng in the Church* (London: John Day, 1570 edn.), 1385.

¹¹⁵ John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments of Matters Most Speciall and Memorable*, 1386.

regular sending of other tokens, only normally classified as reminders of goodwill. In practice the benefits sought in this culture were great, and the gifts they had to offer might need to be commensurately large. When suitors really wanted the Crown, or its ministers, to proffer land and office, they might need to display their 'goodwilling' in ostentatious ways. It will be recalled that one of the contemporary proverbs was 'great gifts are for great men'. Machiavelli, in his dedication of *The Prince* to Lorenzo de Medici, evokes this intensely competitive gift environment in a way as appropriate to England as to the Italian city-states:

[give] things they know especially please him; so we often see Princes given horses, weapons, cloth of gold, precious stones and similar. Men who are anxious to win the favour of a Prince nearly always follow the custom of presenting themselves to him... with ornaments.¹¹⁶

When Burghley advised his son to remember great men with small, but repeated, offerings, he concluded: 'if thou hast cause to bestow any great gratuity, let it be something which may be daily in sight'.¹¹⁷ At the Tudor and early Stuart Court those things that were daily in sight included the lavish gifts of diplomacy: horses from Mantua for Henry VIII; jewels from Spain for Mary I; camels and an elephant for James I; art works for Charles I.¹¹⁸ A little closer to Burghley's concept they also included offerings from those with great mercantile interests: carpets from the Levant Company, lavish plate from the Merchant Adventurers, silks from Venice.¹¹⁹ Most of these were designed to enhance the magnificence of the Crown, but many also found their way into the households of royal favourites and ministers. Some, like Wolsey and Buckingham, accepted these fruits of office unashamedly, others like Cromwell and Burghley (in spite of his own advice), were less likely to display their presents on glittering sleeves. The margin between the gift and the bribe was a sensitive one, and the norms governing proper behaviour were notoriously flexible. Those offering presents to great men had to act cautiously, and to look for legitimization within the acceptable gift register; to emphasize friendship and/or the desire to serve, to minimize even the most valuable present as a bare token.

These issues will be the subject of detailed consideration in the second half of the book. Here we can just note the evidence of what the powerful received from individuals who wished to step beyond gifts 'of little charge'. For much of our period the most common offerings recorded in individual correspondence and surviving accounts were horses, hounds, hawks, and the like. They were first on Machiavelli's list, and feature widely in English records. For example, gifts to Robert Dudley, future Earl of Leicester, in 1558–9 included a great horse from Charles Howard, a

¹¹⁶ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. George Bull (London: Penguin, 1961), 29.

¹¹⁷ Peck, *Desiderata Curiosa*, i, 49. This is an adaptation of Seneca's argument that a gift should meet 'the eyes of the owner over and over so that every time he thinks of it he may think of us'. *De beneficiis*, I. xi. 6.

¹¹⁸ See Chapter 6.

¹¹⁹ These great gifts are part of the material world of the Renaissance, most effectively focused for England in Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

bay gelding from the Earl of Rutland, two great horses from the Swedish ambassador, and mares from Sir Nicholas Poyntz, and in addition several hounds and casts of hawks.¹²⁰ Chamberlain disapproved of the present of six horses from the French ambassador to Buckingham in 1619 as 'a bountie and magnificence fitter to passe between great princes'.¹²¹ A man with more limited access to power, the ninth Earl of Northumberland, was given three horses in 1585–6.¹²² Robert Cecil's known partiality for hawking is reflected in the large number of gifts of hawks and hounds his correspondents provided.¹²³

Machiavelli's jewels are also well represented in the things given in early modern England. Here exchanges between the monarchs and their favourites, and especially gift-giving to Elizabeth, obviously feature prominently. Burghley's biographer remarked what was generally known: the queen was 'very rich in Jewells, which had been given her by her subjects'.¹²⁴ But jewels were also the most visible offering to women of the élite, especially at New Year. The Earl of Arundel made a gesture sufficiently elaborate in 1558 to reach the notice of the Spanish ambassador: he gave Elizabeth's chamber women jewellery worth £450.¹²⁵ As things worn there was a reasonable chance that jewels, and rich clothing, would be seen in the public circumstances of the Court, and so conform to Burghley's injunction about visibility. They also conveyed intimacy: especially in the wearing of locketts and miniatures. And jewels were not just for princes and ladies: Cromwell was offered jewels by both clergy and laity.¹²⁶ The Abbot of St Augustine's, Canterbury, sent the best jewel he had, wishing it was worth £1000, when his house was suffering the earthquake of the royal visitation. Anthony St Leger recognized that jewels were an expected gift, but offered his loyalty, along with a buck: his heart being 'the greatest jewel I have'.¹²⁷ Alexander Nowell gave the Earl of Northumberland a jewel sufficiently valuable for the servant's carriage reward to be 40sh.¹²⁸ And Sir Walter Raleigh, with typical flamboyance, promised Sir Michael Hicks, Lord Burghley's secretary, a pearl to further a suit. The more effective his advocacy, 'the bigger the pearl will be found'.¹²⁹ Monarchs gave, as well as receiving, jewels, and not only to their favourites, though both James I and his queen did that on a scale not seen in England before. Even those beyond the charmed circles of the Court could be so blessed. In 1610, Thomas Lyte, a Somerset antiquary, presented James

¹²⁰ Simon Adams (ed.), *Household Accounts and Disbursement Books of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, 1558–1561, 1584–1586* (London: Camden Society., 5th ser. 6, 1995), 42–83. Dudley's accounts show that the gifts he received also conformed to Machiavelli's pattern in that jewels and a sword were listed.

¹²¹ *Letters of John Chamberlain*, ii, 247.

¹²² Alnwick Castle, MS. U.I. i, Pursebearer's Acct., 1585–6.

¹²³ For example HMC, *Salisbury*, iv, 354; v, 19, 340; vi, 298–9, 362. In an earlier generation Thomas Cromwell's accounts are replete with references to rewards given to those who brought horses, hounds and hawks: *LP*, X, 782.

¹²⁴ Ellis, *Original Letters*, 1st ser. iii, 192. Diana Scarisbrick, *Jewellery in Britain, 1066–1837* (Wilby: Michael Russell, 1994), 132–3.

¹²⁵ *CSP Sp*, 1558–67, 18.

¹²⁶ *LP*, V, 1682; VI, 94.

¹²⁷ *LP*, IX, 744; VII, 862.

¹²⁸ For the audit period 1585–7: *Household Papers of Henry Percy*, 63.

¹²⁹ HMC, *Bath*, ii, 42.

I with a genealogical tree tracing the king's ancestry back to Brutus. In return he received a miniature portrait of James in a jewelled pendant, which survives as the 'Lyte Jewel'.¹³⁰

The gifting of the Court focused more generally upon plate than jewels, at least in the first half of our period. Since moveable wealth in this culture was largely translated into gold, silver, and silver-gilt artefacts it is not surprising that these were constantly given and taken. The commonest exchanges of this form of wealth were at New Year both in the Court and beyond, the occasion justifying unusual largesse.¹³¹ Ambassadorial visits, royal progresses, and christenings provided three diverse moments when plate could, and indeed should, be given and accepted.¹³² It is less clear that standing cups, bowls, and the like could so readily be offered outside these defined occasions. If we examine two detailed sets of accounts for the 1530s and beyond—those for Princess Mary that run from 1536 to 1544 and those of Thomas Cromwell—we find no evidence of rewards for bringing gifts of plate or the like outside the Christmas season in the first set.¹³³ In Cromwell's very detailed records, which are replete with gifts, only two cases of plate as gifts of this 'free' kind stand out: the Marquis of Dorset gave a cup of silver and gilt in May 1537, and in November 1539 a servant of Mr Pickering's was rewarded for bringing a gold cup.¹³⁴ This is not, of course, to suggest that Cromwell did not receive any other plate out of season: the rewards paid to gift-bringers frequently fail to specify what was produced. But it may indicate a certain caution, rather than pride, in the public transmission of such offerings. Judges and other legal officers had to be particularly sensitive to the dangers of ostentatious presents sent without some customary justification.¹³⁵

Plate was most visible beyond the Court in the offerings from and within cities, London above all. These were the glittering prizes offered to the Crown on progress, or the rewards given by the great trading companies to those who had served them well, like the heavy standing cup given to Samuel Pepys after he had acted as Master of the Clothworkers in 1678.¹³⁶ In London it became commonplace from the later sixteenth century to mark major moments within the Companies with gifts of plate. Entrance into the livery often 'required' such an offering; refusal of

¹³⁰ This survives in the British Museum as part of the Waddesdon bequest: Charles H. Read, *The Waddesdon Bequest. Catalogue of the Works of Art Bequeathed to the British Museum by Baron Ferdinand Rothschild* (London: The British Museum, 1902), 79. The Drake Jewel, probably given to Sir Francis after the Armada, is the most spectacular surviving Elizabethan example.

¹³¹ The Earl of Arundel followed his ostentatious gesture to the Queen's ladies by giving her a whole cupboard of plate when she visited on progress in 1559. His motives were transparent: he was hoping that there was a chance of marrying Elizabeth; Julian Lock, 'Henry Fitzalan, Twelfth Earl of Arundel', *ODNB*.

¹³² There are interesting parallels here with the gifts at Indian durbars, at which subjects gave as a form of investiture showing their identity with the body of the ruler: Harry Liebersohn, *The Return of the Gift* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 22.

¹³³ Madden, *Expenses of the Princess Mary*.

¹³⁴ *LP*, XIV, ii, 782, pp. 319, 344. A generation later the accounts of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, are completely silent on gift plate: Adams (ed.), *Accounts... of Robert Dudley*.

¹³⁵ See chapter 7, *The Language of Judicial Corruption*.

¹³⁶ Philippa Glanville, *Silver in England* (London: V. & A., 1987), 307–8.

office and even trade offences could sometimes be compensated by standing cups, though an awareness of the ambiguities of such a donation might be covered by an inscription 'freely given' or other 'honourable' language.¹³⁷ Cities also began to expect to accumulate official plate, and their patrons at times gratified them. Archbishop Matthew Parker, a Norwich boy, gave the corporation a massive silver-gilt ewer and basin, probably in recognition of his brother's mayoral year, securing the gift with a bond against alienation.¹³⁸ Bishop Parkhurst gave Guildford a similar benefaction in 1571.¹³⁹

A complex moveable gift, not mentioned by Machiavelli, nor conforming to Burghley's idea of offerings best kept visible, was money. Here the assumptions of our own culture risk interfering with our ability to understand the past. There are limited occasions for us on which money is an appropriate gift: Mediterranean weddings perhaps; Christmas and birthday presents to young relatives; tips for good service rendered; and above all charitable giving.¹⁴⁰ Otherwise the precise knowledge of monetary value depreciates the offering and risks its removal from the gift register. Money should be kept separate from the social relationships expressed through the gift.¹⁴¹ In early modern England, on the other hand, money often seems to have played a positive role in expressing the spirit of the gift, rather than reducing its moral worth. Money was almost consistently the most favoured offering recorded in marriage disputes, and it was as common at the other end of the social hierarchy in the gifts given to the monarch at New Year.¹⁴² Thomas Cromwell might not have recorded the receipt of many pieces of plate, but his accountant constantly noted monies given to him, some purely as fees, others 'gratuitous' sums. Neither he, nor Wolsey, seems to have experienced the slightest embarrassment about discussing these money gifts, and Cromwell's correspondents were often equally frank, noting the precise sum sent as a token of their goodwill. In characteristic examples, Sir Richard Bulkeley sent £20 as a gift in June 1535, promising to continue it yearly; the next January the Prior of Christ Church, Canterbury, sent twenty royals as a token, in thanks for the restoration of his brother to wardenship of the priory's manors.¹⁴³

Much the same pattern of offers of reward can be found in the correspondence of Michael Hicks. Hicks was the key gatekeeper providing access to his master's patronage, and suitors promised him monetary rewards of anything up to £100

¹³⁷ Philippa Glanville, *Silver in England*, 307–11.

¹³⁸ W. T. Bensley, 'On a Silver-Gilt Ewer and Basin Given by Archbishop Parker to the City of Norwich', *Norfolk Archaeology* 15 (1902–4), 227–32.

¹³⁹ Glanville, *Silver in England*, 60.

¹⁴⁰ Aafke F. Komter, *Social Solidarity and the Gift* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 125–6.

¹⁴¹ Maurice Bloch, 'The Symbolism of Money in Imerina', in Jonathan Parry and Maurice Bloch (eds.), *Money and the Morality of Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 165–6. But Bloch points out that no such embarrassment is felt by the Merina of Central Madagascar, and in the same volume Parry shows that Hindu pilgrims in Northern India are equally impervious to the tensions experienced by Europeans; Jonathan Parry, 'On the Moral Perils of Exchange', 67–9.

¹⁴² O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint*, 71–3.

¹⁴³ TNA, SP1/93, fo. 141'; *LP* X, 13.

for his intervention and support.¹⁴⁴ And it was still often assumed that money was a suitable offering to the great who had benefited a client. Bishop Tobie Matthew, promoted to Durham in 1594 by the Cecilian interest, offered Lord Burghley a present of thanks of £100 in gold.¹⁴⁵ It is interesting that in this case we do not know if it was accepted. The greater caution about presents that we shall see displayed by Robert Cecil may partly be associated with a growing discomfort about the crude acceptance of money shown in these earlier exchanges.

It may be that money usually needed something to mark it out as part of the gift register. This could simply be that it was acceptable as a gesture of thanks or reward, but not as a gift in advance of any political or legal decision. But it could also be differentiated from daily exchange by its physical appearance as well as the circumstances of presentation. Courtship gifts, for example, were more often pieces of gold than silver, the latter the currency of routine exchange. If the donor was poor, a broken or 'bowed' groat or other coin might be given as a modest demonstration of promised commitment. For presentation, gold could be wrapped in paper, or put in a purse—practicality apparently mingling in the donor's mind with a sense of marking the money as unique.¹⁴⁶ Money for the New Year was offered in a purse, or occasionally in a glove, and gold coin was the favoured specie. It seems that money offered to the monarch always had to be converted in this way. And even when no such gestures were necessarily involved, donors often endeavoured to show by their use of language how free gifts were to be separated from fees or other money payments. The Prior of Castleacre in Norfolk sent Cromwell four marks 'for a poor token' and four marks a year for life.¹⁴⁷ It is not clear that Thomas Avery, Cromwell's accountant, always makes the same distinction when recording receipts, but occasionally he shows that donors wanted their money to be gift registered. In 1537, Lord Scrope sent ten marks as his whole year annuity, and added a token of twenty angels. Two years later the Prior of Worcester sent his fee of £5, but added £20 as gift.¹⁴⁸

Money might not be an embarrassment as gift, but it was always transparent as a marker of value, and paradoxically could also readily be concealed for dubious reasons. John Husee was indignant when Thomas Pope, Chancellor of Augmentations, demanded his gratuity not in 'wine or the like', rather in ready money.¹⁴⁹ The habit of transmitting the money for both gift and bribe in a glove was well established in Henry VIII's reign, and raises the problem of the various sums of money that Cromwell's accounts record as having come to him in this form. In the late sixteenth century it was acceptable for judges and other legal officers to receive gifts of plate at New Year and other suitable seasons, but money never passed visibly between hands. And, since the advice of Seneca and Burghley was that great gifts should be visible, money in this crude form ceased to satisfy the desire of suitors to be ostentatious, or of recipients to avoid embarrassment.

¹⁴⁴ Alan G. R. Smith, *Servant of the Cecils: the Life of Sir Michael Hickes* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1977), 68–9.

¹⁴⁵ BL, Lans. MS. 79, fo. 108^r.

¹⁴⁶ O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint*, 66–71.

¹⁴⁷ LP, X, 189.

¹⁴⁸ LP, XIV: ii, 782, pp. 320, 325.

¹⁴⁹ LP, XIV: i, 1219.

Finally among great things that might be represented as gifts we need briefly to consider people. Although personal slavery was ostensibly unknown in early modern England, and therefore the individual and the chattel seem to be different category sets, there are some circumstances in which the two were closely proximate. When Oberon demands the gift of the Indian boy in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and, denied, sets in motion the persecution of Titania, he shows the way in which service and slavery could be conflated by contemporaries. In Wolsey's desperation to return to favour in 1529 he sent Henry his Fool 'surely for a nobleman's pleasure worth a thousand pounds'.¹⁵⁰ The Duke of Buckingham 'gave' his dwarf, Jeffrey Hudson, to Henrietta Maria.¹⁵¹ Monarchs could occasionally conceive of a servant as a gift to a fellow ruler: Pierre Antoine Bourdon, Seigneur de Saint Antoine, was gifted to Prince Henry by Henry IV of France in 1609 as riding master, and remained in royal service to be immortalized by Van Dyck in *Charles I on Horseback with Monsieur de St. Antoine*.¹⁵² The black children imported to please the whims of the rich women of the seventeenth century were scarcely any freer than the monkeys and parrots they also favoured and could equally be given as a present.¹⁵³ When Prince Rupert led a privateering raid on the Gambia in the 1660s he caught a young African and described him as a New Year's gift.¹⁵⁴ English children were no slaves, but Patricia Fumerton makes an interesting case suggesting that the patterns by which they were educated in other households should be seen as part of a gift-exchange system. The language of gifting could be used of children in a variety of contexts: young women were 'freely given' in service; individual children in large families were given to less fecund relatives; the dying Earl of Essex bequeathed his son Robert to Lord Burghley.¹⁵⁵

And women are an even more significant category that can be presented as at the heart of the gift-exchange system, where marriage provides the opportunity to give from one family to another. If we apply classic anthropological readings of the confusion of objects, values, and sexes found in the full gift economy, its ideal expression is the marriage donation, fructifying relations between kin of similar standing and using the movement of the woman as the moment to seal the bond.¹⁵⁶ 'Let us,' says the Old Testament, 'take their daughters to us for wives and let us give them our daughters.'¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁰ Cavendish, *Thomas Wolsey*, 104. It is interesting, however, that the Fool had to be sent to Court with six 'tall yeomen', for, says Cavendish, he was so angry at being told to leave the Cardinal.

¹⁵¹ Christopher Brown & Hans Vlieghe, *Van Dyck 1599-1641* (London: Royal Academy Publications, 1999), 246.

¹⁵² TNA PRO31/3/41, fo. 217'.

¹⁵³ Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 227-49.

¹⁵⁴ Patrick Morrah, *Prince Rupert of the Rhine* (London: Constable, 1976), 264.

¹⁵⁵ Patricia Fumerton, 'Exchanging Gifts: the Elizabethan Currency of Children and Poetry', in her *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), 246-52. However, as Fumerton points out, the elements of gift exchange are far more immediately visible within the Irish system of fosterage.

¹⁵⁶ Gayle Rubin, 'The Traffic in Women: Notes on the "Political Economy" of Sex', in Rayna R. Reiter (ed.), *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 157-210; Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 309 ff.

¹⁵⁷ Phyllis A. Bird, 'Images of Women in the Old Testament', in Rosemary Radford Ruether (ed.), *Religion and Sexism: Images of Women in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974), 54 ff.

In the twenty-first century the bride can still be 'given away' in the religious marriage ceremony. Western culture has, of course, accepted essential views of individuality and personhood that have gradually rendered the 'given woman' otiose. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the beginnings of ideas about the right to choose a marriage partner, while remaining largely committed to patriarchal claims to determine such arrangements. Even in the early modern period, however, contemporaries marked out persons as different from things: they did not think of women as a parallel category to New Year's cups, presentation books, or great jewels. The bride might convey much of the spirit of the gift, with its ability to establish and fructify social bonds: she cannot be accommodated to any simple labelling of herself as gift object.¹⁵⁸

CONCLUSION TO GIFTS SMALL AND GREAT

To list all the material forms of the gift in early modern culture is to try to hold water in the hands. Anything might be a present, in early modern English culture as in our own. However, there are discernible patterns in giving, and there is some danger in assuming that contemporaries did not have a sense of what was most suitably transformed into a gift. Certain objects were strongly identified with material displays of largesse—plate and jewels most obviously: they should be offered at proper seasons; in specific political and other circumstances; and ideally with some formality in the giving. Changes in the nature of such status commodities—the appearance for example of works of art or of the curiosities of European expansion—became highly relevant in the seventeenth century. Books, certain forms of letters, and the products of creative labour, whether intellectual or manual, were readily decommmodified and made into singular gifts. Since significant changes in both literacy and print were key characteristics of this period we can assume that these forms of gifting were more often undertaken in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries than earlier. And then there were gifts of food, far more central in this culture than in later centuries, which ranged from the ostentatious presentation of the products of elite privilege—game in all its forms—down to the merest bowl of apples or pears from a poor man. Although nothing was excluded from the gift register, and the case of money has been seen as a particularly interesting inclusion, basic food stuffs such as grain and ale lacked the status or particularity that made them easy offerings beyond the sphere of charity.

Given the right circumstances and social gestures 'ordinary' commodities were transformed into the distinct category of the gift, taken out of general circulation and made the occasion for individual offering. Self-evidently, not all gold cups, jewels, or books were part of the gift register: the moment was all. The surviving evidence leads us to emphasize the language which transformed the object given, and defined it as a singular offering. Writers constantly identified the gift as token;

¹⁵⁸ Igor Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process', in Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 83–7.

the material object being the mere expression of the goodwill embedded in the gesture of giving. But the form of those gestures, and therefore the circumstances of offering, need equal attention. In particular the issue of absence or presence is one that will be explored in subsequent chapters. Many of the small, and repeated, gifts, which have formed the focus of the first part of this chapter, were transmitted over distance, by servants or other agents of the donor. They served, among other things, as mementoes of those absent—part of the dialogues evoked by Erasmus's comments to Peter Gilles. Greater gifts might best be presented in person, though then calculations about how to elicit appropriate counter-gift and proper expressions of gratitude, was a preoccupation. Later chapters will consider the abundant evidence of the political and social anxiety associated with the gift, especially its part in the patronage system. But first it is necessary to look at the general circumstances in which giving occurred: as part of the seasons, the political and social round and the life cycle.

3

Occasions and Seasons

Gifts articulate the freedom of the giver: his or her ability to choose the moment, the nature, and the circumstances of giving. But in practice, norms and conventions of social behaviour determine much of the way in which this apparent spontaneity operates. Gift practices, to be successful, usually have to follow accepted paths if they are to avoid threatening recipients, or weakening their impact through a failure of understanding. The most common paths for proper gift practices in most cultures are those defined by moments of liminality and transition. Visits by outsiders, and the hospitality they prompt, are one obvious category; key life-cycle events, especially birth and marriage a second; and the annual festive calendar a third. All three played a part in the social economy of early modern England, and are considered briefly here, though the preponderant evidence concerns the New Year's festival, very explicitly seen by contemporaries as the time of gifts.

HONOURING VISITORS

'The law of hospitality', wrote Philip Sidney in *New Arcadia*, obliges the succour of the stranger, and as Christopher Wandesford, the Earl of Strafford's Irish Deputy, added, natural law compelled the host to be generous to outsiders.¹ Various forms of giving to outsiders could be comprehended within these precepts, including the proper reception of monarchs and of representatives of stranger princes, the subject of later chapters. Here the role of gifts in such generosity will be exemplified by the case of giving by towns and gentry communities to influential visitors and to the judges of assize, as representatives of the State. English cities and towns played a significant part in that flow of gifts, especially food gifts, considered in the previous chapter. Townsmen sent presents to influential local landowners and those whom they identified as patrons, often using their distinctive function as centres of trade to

¹ *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, ed. Maurice Evans (London: Penguin, 1977), 385. Christopher Wandesford, *A Book of Instructions to his Son*, ed. Thomas Comber (Cambridge: J. Archdeacon, 1777), 83. On the obligation to entertain see Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 1–22.

dispatch wine, exotic fruits, and sugar loaves.² Those who needed to be courted for their prospective influence could be the subject of a barrage of giving: for example, the Earl of Rutland's accounts show that food and drink was regularly provided by the small local community of Grantham.³ If a town needed particular assistance, as in the acquisition of a new charter, gift-giving had to rise to a crescendo. When the high steward of Bristol, the Earl of Pembroke, helped the city to gain a new charter in the 1620s, he was given large quantities of wine, sugar loaves, oranges, lemons, and prunes and, as a gesture towards newer displays of status, had his portrait painted.⁴

Giving hospitality to the outsider might be part of the moral law, but it is more difficult to situate this aspect of urban behaviour than in the case of deference to patrons, actual or anticipated. And given the broad concept of hospitality it is equally difficult to understand why entertainment and gift-giving were often differentiated. The need to display deference, to account themselves part of the honour community, was probably felt by all corporations: their need to act on this was as much a determinant of geography as of contrasting values. Canterbury was constantly exposed to the movement of the great to and from the Continent.⁵ Chester was en route to Ireland and so much visited: Boston rarely saw great men from outside the area.⁶ As for the choice between gifts given and hospitality offered, circumstance no doubt often determined which was more appropriate. The very full Canterbury records, for example, suggest that hospitality was usually offered to the monarch and royal family, when a tent was customarily erected 'on the Blean', while the regular flow of distinguished visitors to and from the Continent were offered wine and food rather than commensality.⁷ Exeter Corporation went out of their way to gratify the Earl of Essex on several occasions in the 1590s, giving him sugar loaves and salmon. They showed their desire for honourable identity with the Earl by paying for his arms to be painted for the city, not by expecting him to pause to eat with them.⁸ On the other hand full hospitality was a mark of the importance of the guest. Boston Council, thinking that Sir Julius Caesar might

² For the role of gift-giving in urban patronage see Catherine F. Patterson, *Urban Patronage in Early Modern England: Corporate Boroughs, the Landed Elite and the Crown, 1580–1640* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 17–24, 176–7.

³ HMC, *Rutland*, iv, 454.

⁴ Patterson, *Urban Patronage*, 177. Such outlay did not always work: in 1641 the Corporation of Guildford complained that they had laid out large sums for gifts and entertainment for the local gentry but had received no benefit in return: HMC, *6th Report*, Appendix, 374. For other examples of hospitality aimed at gaining political favour see Heal, *Hospitality*, 310–17.

⁵ HMC, *9th Report*, Appendix I, 248 ff; though in the early seventeenth century Ipswich had to pay for a marchpane [marzipan cake] and hippocras [spiced wine] for Sir Michael Stanhope, and wine for the King of Denmark's secretary: Patterson, *Urban Patronage*, 19.

⁶ Margaret Groombridge (ed.), *Calendar of Chester City Council Minutes 1603–1642* (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire 106, 1956). First corporation book for Boston, 1545–1607: John F. Bailey (ed.), *Transcription of the Minutes of the Corporation of Boston*, 4 vols. (Boston, 1980), i.

⁷ HMC, *9th Report*, Appendix, 1, 145–60. It is, however, not easy from the chamberlains' accounts, to be sure when the food given was part of entertainment and when a separate gift. A common pattern was for wine and one additional item, such as fruit, fish, or capons to be given.

⁸ Patterson, *Urban Patronage*, 19.

'stand this corporation in great stead', provided full entertainment for him and his friends in 1605.⁹

Many communities experienced the demands of hospitality and gift-giving most routinely through the annual cycles of the judicial system. Towns that hosted quarter sessions benefited from the increased economic activity that the early modern growth in legal business generated: they also had to gratify the JPs. The significant prize, however, was to host the full assize sessions, and that focused the issues of hospitality and gifts far more acutely. From time immemorial, or rather at least from the Provisions of Oxford (1258), judges were supposed to receive no gifts 'unless it be presents of food or wine', and under the legislation of 20 Edward III, c.1, they had to swear not to take rewards 'beyond the value of meat and drink'.¹⁰ These restrictions on gift-giving did not prevent the judges of assize from having high expectations of hospitality, so much so that sheriffs, whose duty it was to orchestrate their entertainment, often deeply resented the pressures. In 1574 the Privy Council ordered that sheriffs should be relieved of the immediate charges of diet. However, the expectation of generous gifts continued. Peter Walmsly's notebook of the expenses of the judges on the Western Circuit at the end of Elizabeth's reign shows towns and local gentry all regularly producing food gifts to support the hospitality of the sheriffs.¹¹ When Sir John Wynn as sheriff had to entertain the assize judges at Denbigh in 1606 he received approximately ten gifts a day plus money from the local town.¹²

The assize judges were particularly adept at invoking concepts of honour and reputation to embarrass sheriffs and local communities into generosity. William Wentworth advised his son Thomas to be sure when the judges sat in any town 'whear yow are chefe lord' to send a servant with wine and sugar 'for otherwise it wilbe yll taken and remembred'.¹³ The majesty of the law and the authority of the State could be employed to humiliate. When William Farington, the sheriff of Lancashire in 1636, reduced some of the lavish giving customary at the assizes, the peeved judges complained publicly and fined him £700 for a series of minor mistakes in executing his office.¹⁴ In 1656 it was alleged that Sir Edward Atkins had in open court told the sheriff of Suffolk that he needed 'more of his purse and less of his curtesie'.¹⁵ No wonder then that office-holders and corporations were sensitive to charges of neglecting gift-giving. When the Corporation of Warwick was

⁹ Bailey, *Minutes of Boston*, i, 720.

¹⁰ William Stubbs, *Select Charters and Other Illustrations of English Constitutional History*, ed. H. W. C. Davis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), 386; Wilfrid Prest, 'Judicial Corruption in Early Modern England', *PP* 133 (1991), 71.

¹¹ W. D. Cowper (ed.), 'The Expenses of the Judges of Assize riding the Western and Oxford Circuits, temp. Elizabeth 1596–1601', *Camden Miscellany* 4 (London: Camden Society, os 73, 1858), 1–60.

¹² NLW, Wynn MS. 410.

¹³ *Wentworth Papers 1597–1628*, ed. J. P. Cooper (London: Camden Society, 4th ser. 12, 1973), 11.

¹⁴ *The Farington Papers*, ed. S. M. Farington (Manchester: Chetham Society, os 39, 1856), 28–9.

¹⁵ Thomas Birch (ed.), *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe Containing Memorials of the English Affairs from 1638 to the Restoration*, 7 vols. (London: 1742), v, 230.

audited by a commission, established by Lord Keeper Egerton in a complex revenue dispute, the critics who challenged the town's probity questioned 'the giffes and gratuities given to the Judges and Justices' as well as to visiting nobles. Their *custos rotulorum*, Sir Thomas Leigh, was an opponent of the burghers, but on this issue sprang to their defence. Towns had to respect noble personages and 'Judges and Justices... come for the publicke good and of the whole contrey'. They could not be given less 'in any civell or modest respectt' than the sugar, cakes, or small gifts that were involved. Gifts, for Leigh, need not of themselves be costly: as tokens they bore the respects of the urban community so that they would not appear 'like stockes and stones' at key political moments.¹⁶ As so often in gift-giving the maintenance of proper hierarchy and order through the material gesture was crucial.

GIFTS AND THE LIFE CYCLE

Gifts flowed in complex ways to register and celebrate the life cycle. It is easiest to generalize about the patterns associated with birth, and christening, since there was a broad consistency about social behaviour across status and time. Birth gifts were generally small offerings which flowed into the household to give thanks for safe delivery, and were overwhelmingly provided by women: the mother's gossips. They offer a first example of the reciprocal giving that was a common feature of rites of passage: the household provided wine and sweetmeats while the visitors added their own cakes and tarts.¹⁷ This pattern persisted at the christening, though as a more open occasion the obligation to household hospitality was stronger, at least for the élite. The elaborate protocol established for aristocratic christenings, such as that recorded in 'the Orders and Regulations for an Earl's House' and used by the Earl of Huntingdon under Elizabeth, allowed some scope for general eating and drinking, and in the next reign Sir John Oglander was recording that 'all the better sort of the country' were entertained at the christening of his son John.¹⁸

The defining gifts of the christening were those of the godparents, their religious commitment to nurture the soul of the child being matched by their material present. The latter could be read, as it is perhaps in modern society, as a pledge of an acceptance of long-term support for the infant. Parents certainly chose their godparents with great care, and status and influence were considerations in a society which still perceived spiritual kinship as some substitute for, or addendum to, other forms of personal connection. The gift that was bestowed on the child reflected the importance that the connection was perceived to have by all parties.

¹⁶ Warwicks RO, CR1618/W21/6. I am grateful to Clive Holmes for this reference.

¹⁷ David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life-Cycle in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 84–7; 167. There was gifting at lying-in throughout the society: a number of towns tried to restrict the cost and celebration because of its strain on the poor: Heal, *Hospitality*, 365–6.

¹⁸ Bodl., Eng. Hist. MS., b. 208, fos. 15–19v. Francis Bamford (ed.), *A Royalist's Notebook: the Commonplace Book of Sir John Oglander* (London: Constable, 1936), 176.

This was the one occasion on which plate was regarded as *de rigueur* by any godparent of means. A common choice, particularly in the first half of our period, was to give a standing salt, presumably because of the use of salt in the pre-Reformation baptismal ritual.¹⁹ Monarchs, who were regularly asked to act as godparents, and who accepted that role in the case of favoured servants and members of the aristocracy, were as conscious of this duty as any mere gentleman or townsman. The royal Jewel House gift rolls record christening gifts after those of the New Year, intermixed with presents to ambassadors and visiting princes. Although the size and value of these presents was less than those to the ambassadors, they were often greater than the individual cups and bowls given at the New Year's ceremony. In 1552, for example, Edward VI gave 27¾ ounces of plate to Lord Grey's son, and 32¾ ounces to the Earl of Worcester's child.²⁰ Similar figures are common in Elizabeth's reign, though she could show exceptional favour, as when George Carey's daughter was given a christening gift of 101 ounces of silver.²¹ All of this pales into insignificance when compared to the offerings that had to be made when a prince was christened. At Edward VI's christening the gold cup of Princess Mary, and the great bowls and pots of silver gilt from Cranmer, the Duke of Norfolk, and the Duke of Suffolk, were carried ceremonially in procession by other peers.²²

The correspondence and accounts of nobles and gentlemen are replete with information about sums laid out for christening gifts, and the obligation to dispatch them even if the godparent could be at the ceremony only by proxy. Elizabeth Clinton, Countess of Lincoln, arranged for her cousin to deputize at the christening of Sir Julius Caesar's daughter, assuring him that she would send a piece of plate.²³ When John Chamberlain substituted for the absent Dudley Carleton at the christening of the latter's nephew and godson, he spoke disapprovingly of the other godfather, Sir John Bennet, who claimed he would appear, then failed to do so.²⁴ It seems that the christening celebration was also unusual in that *only* the godparents were expected to give silver and plate. Silver was used to symbolize the particular bond of goodwill and protection that should exist between godparent and child and is a particularly striking example of the material object used as demarcator of a unique relationship. At other rites of passage gifts flowed in general accord with status and wealth, with some regard to proximity of blood. But accounts like that of Joyce Jeffries, who noted the thirteen gifts she gave to her thirteen godchildren, are very explicit about the obligation.²⁵

¹⁹ Philippa Glanville, *Silver in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (London: V. & A., 1990), 281–2.

²⁰ TNA, C47/3/54. Examples of the comparable figures for New Year's gifts to the nobility are 25 ¾ ounces to the Earl of Huntingdon, and 31 ¾ ounces to the Countess of Pembroke.

²¹ TNA, C47/ Bundle 3/39. This was in 1587.

²² BL, Add. MS. 6113, fo.81^r. The messengers sent to announce the birth were also given great gifts. The narratives do not give a value for these gifts, but at New Year 1539 the godparents collectively gave 6 ¾ ounces of gold and 93 ounces of silver gilt—Princess Mary adding a coat of crimson satin: BL, Cott. MS. Appendix 28, fo. 41^r and ^v.

²³ HMC, *Middleton*, 604. Examples of this kind can easily be multiplied in the élite correspondence of the period.

²⁴ *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure, 2 vols. (American Philosophical Society, PA, 1939), ii, 61.

²⁵ BL, Egerton MS. 3054.

Husee advised Lady Lisle that she did not need to send a present to Lady Sussex at her child's christening, 'for none of her friends gave her anything except the godfathers and godmothers'.²⁶ Samuel Pepys, an enthusiastic godfather to a number of children, withheld the plate he had purchased for Mrs Browne's son, 'for as much as I expected to give the name to the child, but did not . . . I forbore then to give my plate, till another time, after a little more advice'.²⁷

The rites associated with courtship and marriage display more complex patterns of exchange. Courtship gifts, already considered, provide a crucial example of the present as a deferred promise of future performance: hence the frequency with which they appear in Church court litigation. When that promise of performance was fulfilled it was symbolized by the gift of the ring in marriage. 'The ring,' said Henry Parker in *Dives et Pauper*, 'is rounde about and hath none end, in token yt their love sholde be endeles'.²⁸ The wedding ceremony provided the opportunity to present the bride's dowry (at least in symbolic form) to the groom's family. The contracts that underpinned propertied marriage might be expressed in gift language, even though they were unlikely to be fully visible in the ritual exchanges that made up the last stages of the marriage process.

The offerings made by guests at christenings and marriage were apparently 'free' in the sense of expecting no specific return. The gifts were usually inter-generational: the reciprocities complex in that they more often relate to the parents of the parties engaged than to the individuals who are changing status. The great, of course, gave great gifts much discussed in Court gossip. In 1632 it was reported that the marriage of the daughter of the Duchess of Lennox to Jerome Weston elicited 'many great presents' including plate worth £3000 from the Earl Marshall.²⁹ In the previous reign the notorious marriage of Robert Carr, James's favourite, to the newly divorced Frances Howard, stimulated a frenzy of giving. John Chamberlain commented that 'the presents indeed were more in number and value than ever I thincke were geven to any subject in this land'.³⁰ In a subsequent letter he observed that the gifts were somewhat less than his first estimate, having been assessed by the goldsmiths at not above £12000, even so a royal fortune.³¹

Plate and money on a more modest scale was also given at gentry weddings. When Anne Lewkenor married into the Le Strange family her new in-laws gave her domestic silver costing £24. They gave their son-in-law who married their daughter Elizabeth silver and other gifts worth £36, with an interesting gender

²⁶ 19th April, 1538: *LP*, XIII, 806.

²⁷ *The Diary of Samuel Pepys: a New and Complete Transcription*, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews, 11 vols. (London: G. Bell, 1970–83), ii, 109–10.

²⁸ Henry Parker, *Dives et Pauper* (Westminster: Wynkyn de Worde, 1496), sig. O ii^r.

²⁹ TNA, C115/107/8549.

³⁰ *Letters of Chamberlain*, i, 495. Chamberlain rarely mentioned an important wedding without a detailed calculation of the gifts of plate and other luxuries given. The efforts of the poets to match the lavishness of such material offerings with their own gestures is discussed in Alison V. Scott, *Selfish Gifts: the Politics of Exchange and English Courtly Literature, 1580–1628* (Madison, WI: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), 159–87.

³¹ *Letters of Chamberlain*, i, 498.

bias in the choice of things given.³² It is surprisingly difficult to track presents of this kind, but they must surely have been the norm. One of the commonest patterns that can be identified in diaries and accounts is that of masters giving at the marriage of their servants, and sometimes also to the servants of kin and friends. In Norfolk the Gawdy accounts show regular 'asks' for benevolences by other gentlemen on behalf of servants: a royal or French crown seems to have been a standard response.³³ Among the less affluent the various forms of bride-ale or bid-ale, that served in part to fund the wedding celebrations, could also support the establishment of the poor household. William Vaughan in his *Golden-Grove Moralized* (1600) described the practice of putting money for the married pair into a cup or plate left out in the church.³⁴ Giles Moore, the Sussex rector who recorded his gifts so carefully, often noted small sums given to young couples in his parish. In 1657 he gave the smith seven shillings at his marriage to Widow Wellers: three years later he was more generous to James Warnett and his wife, who received ten shillings and a silver spoon specially purchased at Lewes.³⁵

Wedding gifts travelled vertically between generations and from those of higher to those of lower status. They also travelled horizontally, especially when guests provided food towards the celebrations. One of the best-documented cases is that of the marriage in 1567 of Sir William More's daughter, to Mr Polsted. More's detailed record of costs noted proudly that the fresh 'achates' given were worth a hundred marks, whereas his own contribution only amounted to twenty marks.³⁶ The outward flow of gifts involved of course the wedding cheer provided, or at least orchestrated, by the family of the bride. It also included the giving of gloves by the bridal couple to those attending the celebration. These were the responsibility of the groom, though Henry Best suggests that 'sometimes the man gives gloves to the men, and the women to the women'.³⁷ Gloves for an aristocratic wedding could be a significant investment. Chamberlain reported that Lucy Goodere, who served the Countess of Bedford, was given £500 for her gloves by her mistress 'which brought in a great contribution of plate to make up a portion which her father Sir Henry could not give'.³⁸ Here the gift was clearly designed to stimulate a greater counter-offering. While other mementoes such as ribbons might substitute for gloves, the latter were the most common offering, especially among the élite. There were few tokens of bonding and friendship that were as important in early

³² Jane Whittle and Elizabeth Griffiths, *Consumption and Gender in the Early Seventeenth Century Household* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 168–9. Anne received a skillet, ladle, basin, and small candlestick, William Spring a salt and a round 'voyder' knife.

³³ HMC, *Gawdy*, 27, 32, 35, 80–1, 116. The accounts of the fourth Earl of Bath for 1567–8 are also replete with presents given to his own or other men's servants. Sometimes two or three gifts were made within a month: BL, Harl. MS. 7390.

³⁴ William Vaughan, *The Golden-Grove, Moralized in Three Bookes* (London: Simon Stafford, 1600), sig. N 3^v. Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, 366–7.

³⁵ *The Journal of Giles Moore*, ed. Ruth Bird (Cambridge: Sussex Record Society 68, 1971), 316, 320.

³⁶ SHC, LM /2021 The account is published in *Archaeologia* 36 (1855), 31–51.

³⁷ Quoted in Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, 362.

³⁸ *Letters of Chamberlain*, ii, 291.

modern culture. Gloves could be a gift on any occasion, and we shall encounter them again in various elite contexts, but their primary uses were to mark the two rites of passage of marriage and burial. 'Insteade of mariage gloves/ now funeral gloves they have,' says Arthur Brooke in his translation of *The Tragicall Historie of Romeus and Iuliet* (1562).³⁹ They had the advantage over other clothing, they could be adapted to circumstance—lace-trimmed or white for weddings, black for funerals. The hand gesture as a mark of amity made these relatively simple gifts rich in symbolic power.

Gloves were the most widely dispersed of funeral gifts, but 'blacks', or increasingly other forms of remembrance were also given to mark the identity of mourners. These could be conceptualized either as a general *memento mori* or as a last exchange between the dead, their kin, and friends, the latter returning gratitude by their presence at the burial and wake.⁴⁰ When the preacher Robert Hill justified mourning customs in the early seventeenth century he began by arguing that it ensured that the memory of a friend was preserved, and concluded that 'it is but a legacy of the dead to the living'.⁴¹ Funeral gifts, clothing apart, were doles and dinners. Drinking sessions or dinners were common throughout the middling and upper ranks of the society, though the emphasis on promiscuous funeral cheer notably diminished in the later seventeenth century. The serious intention of sustaining funeral doles to the poor, the gift of food and drink, and of small sums of money, began to fall foul of new religious views and of broader changes in attitudes to the indigent. But some degree of charitable impulse survived, perhaps as gifts to the local poor, or the invitation of a selected few to dine with the mourning group.⁴²

SEASONS FOR GIVING

The giving of presents followed a yearly, as well as a life, cycle. Some of this seasonality simply reflected the heat and cold of the northern climate. Food offerings had, of their nature, to respond in this way: what had been grown or reared would be given when it was ready and ripe. Even the hunting of game had to obey the logic of the reproductive cycle, and the records of the clerks of the kitchen and stewards in the great establishments show waves of glut and dearth in gifts of venison and other game.⁴³

³⁹ Matteo Bandello, *The Tragicall Historie of Romeus and Iuliet Contayning in it a Rare Example of True Constantie*, trans. Arthur Brooke (London: Richard Tottell, 1562), fo. 70^v.

⁴⁰ Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England 1480–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 274, 276–7.

⁴¹ Robert Hill, *The Pathway to Prayer and Pietie* (London: Felix Kyngston for Edward Blount, 1610), 276.

⁴² Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 288–9.

⁴³ The Bolton Abbey accounts for the Earl of Cumberland from 1600–1 show a sharp rise in fish gifts in April, a rich range of specialist fruit and vegetables in summer, swans, curlews, and other birds in abundance in August, and venison from August onwards: Chatsworth Estates Trust, Bolton Abbey Accts, 225. Those of Lord William Howard of Naworth from 1612 onwards also show fish gifts as significant in spring, with geese, chicken, and game in autumn: George Ornsby (ed.), *Selections from the Household Books of Lord William Howard of Naworth* (London: Surtees Society 68, 1878), 27 ff.

The late summer was, of course, a great period for food gifts as the richness of harvest met with the most critical season for the hunt. Winter could provide rich offerings of game birds: swans and teal in particular. At other seasons the reared or stored had to predominate: pigs, capons, turkeys, and, from the poor apples and pears.⁴⁴

It might be assumed that the man-made cycle of the festive year was less constrained, and that it offered many opportunities for gift-exchange. Natalie Davis's description of the gifts of the annual French cycle begins with New Year, and moves through the Circumcision, Epiphany, Lent, and Easter to Pentecost, with plenty of local celebrations to add to these great feasts.⁴⁵ Much of the material giving involved was charitable, small offerings to mark the spiritual significance of the day, and to show that humans had to express their own thanks for divine grace through beneficence. The holy day also marked out the opportunity for sociability that was reinforced by the token gifts of eggs or the like. In England the holy days were occasions both for communal exchange, in entertainment, and in giving to the poor. Plough Sunday, to take one example, provided an opportunity in some places to give poor ploughmen access to the parochial plough. Though not all of this survived the Reformation, some cyclical celebration did. Rogationtide, when the bounds of the parish were walked, continued to be marked with food for the participants, and occasionally additional small rewards as well.⁴⁶ Midsummer festivities, well recorded for London but also known elsewhere, involved bread and ale for the poor as well as good feasting for the urban élites.⁴⁷ And at the apex of the society the royal Maundy ceremony continued, giving gifts to poor women and men by the monarch on the Thursday before Easter. In secular ritual mayor- and sheriff-making, admission to guild office, and the ceremonies of lawyers such as the creation of sergeants-at-law could all be occasions for hospitality and gift-giving.⁴⁸

There was one festival par excellence for giving: the Twelve Days of the Christmas Season. And within that cycle of celebration, though hospitality and social exchange took place generally, the New Year was marked out as the time for gifts. In our culture, as in that of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the mid-winter festival provides the opportunity and the obligation to present to our kin, friends, and possibly those who have rendered service to us. At Christmas

⁴⁴ On these patterns, and the gradual development of methods of storing produce the better to manage seasonality see Joan Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England: Phases, Fads, Fashions 1500–1760* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007).

⁴⁵ Davis, *The Gift*, 38–42.

⁴⁶ The ritual year, as it existed in the first part of the sixteenth century, is best described in Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: the Ritual Year 1400–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 5–48. On Rogationtide hospitality, Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England*, 175–6; Steve Hindle, 'Beating the Bounds of the Parish: Order, Memory, and Identity in the English Local Community, c.1500–1700', in Michael Halvorson and Karen E. Spierling (eds.), *Defining Community in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 205–28.

⁴⁷ For the Midsummer festival in London see John Stow, *A Survey of London*, ed. Charles L. Kingsford, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), i, 98–9.

⁴⁸ Robert Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in English Politics and Political Culture, c.1540–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Wilfrid Robertson Prest, 'Readers' Dinners and the Culture of the Early Modern Inns of Court', in Jayne Elisabeth Archer, et al. (eds.), *The Intellectual and Cultural World of the Early Modern Inns of Court* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 107–23.

we give to receive. We set aside that 'law' of the gift which demands that offerings attract counter gifts only after a suitable delay, and that the circulation of benefits requires the gradual accumulation of social capital over time. For this reason theorists of the gift sometimes disregard the significance of these annual moments of prestation, which seem to have less cultural influence than those of delayed exchange. As recipients we know what we should do at the Christmas season: return socks for biscuits, or cufflinks for bracelets, in gestures that articulate affection, but do not represent a duty to make further material offerings at a later date. There are, of course, strong normative pressures to act properly in these exchanges. We have to give appropriate thanks for the socks. Yet the process may seem to add little to our more general understanding of how relationships function in modern Western culture. It is noteworthy that very few of the studies of gifting undertaken in recent years focus upon Christmas exchange.⁴⁹

Such omission is unfortunate in a modern context: it would be culpable in any study of the pre-industrial period. In late medieval and early modern England New Year was the only fully established occasion for gift-exchange, and certainly the only one that encompassed the majority of the population. In his dedication of a book as New Year's gift to Lord Audley in 1543, the printer Richard Grafton talks of presents at this season as 'grounded upon benevolence, confirmed by the consent of people'.⁵⁰ Thomas Churchyard, Elizabethan hack poet and chaser of patronage, cast his begging to the Earl of Ormond in the glow of mutual goodwill at New Year:

An auncient gise hath been this daie for diverse drifts,
(Emong our friends to wishes of good yere) and give some New yeres gifts:
Yea of the meanest man the greatest Prince will take,
And none that can conceive good will, doe friendly gifts forsake.⁵¹

This was the key moment of giving in the longer cycle of the Twelve Days' festival. The Twelve Days in their turn provided an even sharper separation from everyday practice than does our Christmas season. To test the importance of gifts in early modern culture we need to focus closely on what happens at New Year.

Present-giving was multifaceted. Some sense of this can be seen in the dedication that Edward Thomas offered to the governors of Shrewsbury in his volume *Encomium Salopiae* (1615), as a New Year's gift:

It hath beene an ancient custome, not onely with us, but also with forraigne Nations,
that in the beginning of the new yeare, gifts should passé and bee bestowed by equals

⁴⁹ There are exceptions: for example Cheal's study of the modern gift economy: David Cheal, *The Gift Economy* (London: Routledge, 1988), and particularly Caplow's research on Christmas gifts in 'Middletown' America: Theodore Caplow, *Middletown Families: Fifty Years of Change and Continuity* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1982). Komter has studied some of these issues in Holland: her local research in Dutch is partly summarized in Aafte E. Komter, *Social Solidarity and the Gift* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁵⁰ *The Precepts of the Excellent Clerke [and] Grave Philosopher Plutarcke for the Preservation of Good Healthe*, trans. John Hales (London: Richard Grafton, 1543), sig. A3^r.

⁵¹ Thomas Churchyard, *A Pleasant Laborinth Called Churchyardes Chance* (London: John Kyngston, 1580), fos. 33^v–34^r.

unto their equals, Inferiors to their Superiors, and sometimes by Superiors unto their Inferiors, as signes and tokens of well wishing mindes, for the increase of love and Amitie; which were commonly called new Yeares gifts, and were of divers kindes agreeable to the abilitie and disposition of the Giver: some ornaments for the Bodie, as Ringes, Gloves, Iewls and such like, some of another kinde to recreate and refresh the mind, as Epigrams or Pamphlets...⁵²

Thomas's comment should be remarked for its emphasis on gifts for the mind as well as the body, but particularly for his careful observations of social hierarchy. Presents, which we largely associate with exchanges between approximate equals as an expression of friendship, or within a family as an expression of kin loyalty, are here enmeshed in a vision of asymmetrical social benevolence.

There are at least three roots to New Year's offering in early modern England. The first is the Roman habit of exchanging gifts between kin and friends at the saturnalia festival, which provides the most easily recognized continuity with our modern experience. The second is the '*gestum*' or 'look'--the process in which customary tenants made offerings to their lords at this season: presents of food and drink that could be constituted fully as rent, or as service gestures made in return for equally obligatory feasting. The third is the gift as an act of homage within feudal society: the moment at which to affirm fealty, and to have that fealty acknowledged, normally with a return gift from the lord. This practice, though a logical outgrowth of feudal relationships, was also given a classical association by sixteenth-century humanists, who pointed to the offerings made by the Roman senate to the emperors on the kalends of January.⁵³

It should be stressed that none of these forms of behaviour paid attention to the religious festivals of Christmas or Epiphany. The Church's calendar might define the Twelve Day festival, and contemporaries were aware of the conflation of the pagan and the Christian, the sacred and the secular within the great winter celebration. Richard Hooker spoke somewhat defensively of the merits of the *adiaphora* of the season, accepting that men decked their houses with boughs, sent 'new-year's gifts unto [their] friends' and feasted on the same days as gentiles.⁵⁴ Yet within this pluralistic celebration, gift-exchange was reserved to the most secular moment of New Year.⁵⁵ Though food offerings might be made throughout the period, presumably to support feasting, the English, like the French, adhered to the practice of giving their *étrennes* to celebrate the coming of the new season.⁵⁶ New Year's exchanges were therefore not explicitly sacred in character; the Deity's role was no more than that which inhered in

⁵² Edward Thomas, *Encomium Salopiae, or the Description of the Pleasant Situation, Commendable Government and Rarities... of Shrewsbury* (London: W. Stansby for Richard Meighan, 1615), sig. A3r.

⁵³ *The Works of the Famous Antiquary, Polidore Virgil, Containing the Original of all Arts, Sciences, Mysteries, Orders, Rites and Ceremonies, both Ecclesiastical and Civil*, trans. Thomas Langley (London: Simon Miller, 1663), 193; *A General Collection of Discourses of the Virtuosi of France, Upon Questions of All Sorts of Philosophicall and Other Natural Knowledge*, trans. George Havers (London: Thomas Dring & John Starkey, 1664), 554.

⁵⁴ Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Bk IV, ch. V. ii: 5.

⁵⁵ For these, and many other purposes, the English seem to have thought of the New Year as beginning on 1st January, despite the shift in calendar year occurring on 25th March: Alfred F. Pollard, 'New Year's Day and Leap Year in English History', *EHR* 55 (1940), 177–93.

⁵⁶ Davis, *The Gift*, 37–8.

every moral transaction. We might contrast this with the role that St Nicholas, as the bringer of gifts to the poor and children, played in winter gift-exchange in the Low Countries and Germany. The cult of Nicholas was strong in medieval England, and provided one of the two dates on which the festival of the 'boy bishop' took place, but it did not provide the same focus for giving presents.⁵⁷ And, while charity and hospitality to the needy were generally associated with the mid-winter festival in England, they were also decoupled from explicit gestures of gifting.

Since two of the three elements of New Year's gifting emerged from the compulsory structures of rent and service, we should assume that claims of disinterested offerings, 'for love and amity', have to be treated with particular caution. Not only was there the usual expectation of return, in this case immediate, but there was a clear quantifiable element in what was given and received. In the case of tenurial 'offerings' rent agreements might lay down the precise number of capons, eggs, or other comestibles that were required. Élite giving by tenants-in-chief to the Crown was more flexible, but the response from Crown to subjects was very tightly calibrated when detailed evidence becomes available in the early sixteenth century. Yet this fixity, this very lack of freedom in the material objects exchanged, constitutes part of the interest of this ritual giving. It seems it was the performance of offering that was of central importance to the actors: giving within the context of the tenant feast, or the Court celebration, either ensured successful social bonding, or might expose some of the tensions in these relationships.

Medieval customals specified the beer, bread, and broth to which the villain was entitled as part of his reward for service. An early fourteenth-century customal for the manor of North Curry, Somerset, owned by the Dean and Chapter of Wells, gave key tenants white loaves, as much beer as they could drink, and a mess of beef and bacon on Christmas Day, and hospitality on St Stephen's Day at the 'medale'. The latter was a day of reward for services rendered, held in the lord's chamber.⁵⁸ It seems that the Chapter thought itself disadvantaged in these exchanges: in the late fourteenth century the steward of the estates was being instructed not to permit the traditional feast-rights.⁵⁹ In other early examples, hen rents paid at the Christmas season were the trigger for the entertainment of the *gestum*, or tenants were required to produce food or grain in order to gain their reward.⁶⁰ Homans suggests that the *gestum* may often only have been

⁵⁷ John Brand, *Popular Antiquities of Great Britain*, additions by H. Carew Hazlitt, 3 vols. (London: 1870), i, 19–20; A. Ward, 'A Sermon for a Boy Bishop by John Alcock', *Ephemeridea Liturgicae*, 112 (1998), 58–81. The other 'boy bishop' day fell within the Twelve Days on the Feast of the Innocents.

⁵⁸ HMC, *Wells*, i, 332–7.

⁵⁹ HMC, *Wells*, 275, 286.

⁶⁰ This seems to be the case on some of the Sussex manors of the Archbishops of Canterbury where the cottager tenants brought in rent hens at Christmas: B. C. Redwood and A. E. Wilson (eds.), *Customals of the Sussex Manors of the Archbishops of Canterbury*, (Cambridge: Sussex Record Society 57, 1958), 41–2, 48, 83. In a 1301 case from Sistia, Gloucestershire, twelve customers had to render a loaf worth 1d and a hen worth 2d, and each was then entitled to come with his wife at Christmas to have food from the lord, or 3d in lieu. On the role of customary 'gifts', including lok hens, in medieval accounts see Christopher M. Woolgar, 'Gifts of Food in Late Medieval England', *Journal of Medieval History* 37 (2011), 8–9.

worth what was given in service or rent, or even less.⁶¹ This may depend on who initiated the exchange: the hens given as part of many of these transactions may have originated with the tenants, who passed these gifts among themselves and to the lord. Only later did the latter come to see them as a fixed source of profit. The feast was offered as the counter-gift, presumably to offer balanced reciprocity, with the additional benefit of enhancing the bond between lord and man. And on some occasions the tenurial element in the exchange was already integrated with more general support for entertainment. The Abbey of Vale Royal, Cheshire, recorded the gifts given at the Christmas season in 1330: tenants figured prominently in the list, but local gentlemen, other abbots and the brethren of the house itself provided a rich range of foods for the season.⁶²

As the nature of land exploitation shifted in the late fourteenth and fifteenth century, evidence about the tenant feast vanishes. The leasing of the demesne and the retreat from labour services meant that rentals superseded customals as the key records of estate management. Only in the sixteenth century does fragmentary evidence again emerge for these exchanges between lord and tenant. By then there was no great incentive to dwell upon that element in household behaviour which made entertainment the return present for involuntary gifts. Instead the general virtues of lordly largesse were the subject of praise. Thus gentlemen are constantly praised for holding 'great Christmases', or offering 'great hospitality' to all comers. Gervase Holles described the celebrations of his Henrician ancestor Sir William who 'always began his Christmas at All-Hallowtide and continued it until Candlemas'.⁶³ Sir Thomas Palmer was said to have kept sixty great Christmases without intermission.⁶⁴

The surviving records of entertainment at the Christmas season nevertheless show traces of the contractual nature of the original exchanges. Tenants were often a major focus of hospitality, and were entertained in rotation, with a day allocated to those from a particular manor: the apparent openness of the season managed in the interests of order.⁶⁵ An excellent example is provided by the Petre accounts. In the Christmas season, 1551–2, Sir William Petre built a cumulative pattern of hospitality at his Ingatestone estate in Essex. A small number of outsiders were entertained on Christmas Day and 26th December, then from 27th December onwards the tenants of Ingatestone, Mountnessing, Margaretting, and Buttsbury were received in turn. The great days of feasting were New Year and Twelfth Night, when tenants jostled with local gentry and with the poor.⁶⁶ While there were other groups who clearly benefited from élite

⁶¹ George Casper Homans, *English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942), 357.

⁶² John Brownhill, (ed.), *The Ledger Book of Vale Royal Abbey* (Edinburgh: Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society 68, 1914), 179.

⁶³ Gervase Holles, *Memorials of the Holles Family*, ed. Alfred Cecil Wood (London: Camden Society, 3rd ser. 55, 1937), 45.

⁶⁴ Edward Hasted, *History of Kent*, 12 vols. (Canterbury: W. Bristow, 1797–1801), ix, 235.

⁶⁵ Heal, *Hospitality*, 72–7.

⁶⁶ Essex Record Office, D/DP/A12. There is detailed discussion of Petre's housekeeping in Frederick Emmison, *Tudor Secretary: Sir William Petre at Court and at Home* (London: Longmans, 1961), 123–59.

entertainment at this season it is the tenurial basis of many of the lists drawn up by clerks of the kitchen which is most striking.

The later history of these tenant offerings can be traced reasonably effectively through the estate records of the landed élite. The use of hens, capons, and other birds as forms of rent in kind did not vanish with the flight from demesne farming: indeed the economic circumstances of the later sixteenth century prompted a revival of this form of tribute in some areas.⁶⁷ A well-known example is that of the earls of Pembroke, who in 1575 were owed corn-rent from twenty-two manors, plus 94 capons, 98 hens, 64 geese, and 960 pigeons.⁶⁸ In 1611, the Earl of Rutland got all his oats and most of his wheat as rent in kind from his substantial tenants.⁶⁹ Viscount Montague's instructions to his steward in 1595 included the observation that it would be desirable for farmers to pay their rent in beef, mutton, and poultry.⁷⁰ But drawing resources in kind on this scale from large tenant farmers seems far removed from any concept of gifting, or of the seasonality of exchange. More characteristic is the survival of agreements with small customary tenants to provide one or two hens or capons, often at the Christmas season. In Wales in the seventeenth century, for example, leases on Lord Herbert of Cherbury's Powis Castle estate regularly added hens to the money rents, though sometimes offering an alternative of money only. These were customary tenants, still in some cases subject to heriots as late as the 1630s, and closely connected to the household, for example through the carriage of charcoal.⁷¹ Though this is unusually systematic and traditional, the survival of agreements which demanded the physical presentation of birds and animals is common enough. A random lease for 1625 surviving among the Mildmay papers gives a clear sense of this type of agreement: one Wood agrees to bring Dame Frances Harvey two fat capons yearly at Christmas, and to send a dish of fish at each quarter day.⁷² And the consequences of all of this can be found in the occasional list of capons etc. due, like that for the Griffith family of Anglesey, who were owed thirty-seven capons at Christmas and Easter 1614.⁷³

These forms of payment are quite well recorded in the household accounts of the élite, because the clerks of the kitchen needed to note what resources had been provided rather than purchased, and because the steward or equivalent officer had to offer reward to those who brought food. And, crucially, these lists almost invariably recorded the hens and capons as presents—conflating mandatory offerings with those that might be defined as gestures of goodwill. It was a rare accountant who bothered to separate rent in kind from other gifts. Alice Le Strange did so in Jacobean Norfolk, but she was an unusually obsessive manager of her own

⁶⁷ Joan Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales: IV, 1500–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 482–3. Lawrence Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558–1641* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 301–2 cites numerous examples, but doubts whether the practice was on the increase.

⁶⁸ BL, Harl. MS. 7186, fo. 19r.

⁶⁹ HMC, *Rutland*, iv, 480–6.

⁷⁰ 'The Household Orders of Viscount Montague, 1595', ed. S. D. Scott, *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 7 (1854), 188–9.

⁷¹ NLW, Powis Castle MS., Calendar, vol. i.

⁷² HMC, *7th Report*, 593.

⁷³ NLW, Carreg-lwyd MS., ser I, 1413.

resources: the Earl of Shrewsbury's clerk of the kitchen sometimes did so in the 1580s.⁷⁴ Much more common were listings that assumed all offerings were gifts, if only because household clerks did not have to pay for them except in gratuities to servants. Occasionally the process of conflation is made explicit, as in the listing of the tenants of Dr William Griffith, Chancellor of Bangor, who in 1640 owed numerous capons and sheep at Christmas as rent, but whose offerings were labelled 'presents'.⁷⁵

It is unusual to be able to identify this intertwining of the compulsive and voluntary in the language of New Year's giving, but the implicit assumptions of the household texts are that all these offerings sustained personal bonds. Where lists of gifts survive they are often divided by manors, thereby underlining the tenurial element in the food presented. A stray household account for the Willoughby household at Wollaton in 1620 lists offerings of hens, pullets, and capons by manor.⁷⁶ The thorough accounts of the fifth Earl of Huntingdon record lengthy lists of New Year's gifts of food, annotated by manor, with the sum paid in reward to the bringer.⁷⁷ And, as a late example, the Leighs of Stoneleigh in Warwickshire recorded tenant offerings at New Year throughout the seventeenth century, the last dated list coming from 1699.⁷⁸ But in all these cases, though estate relationships clearly underpin the form of recording, there are other gifts, from 'strangers' as the Wollaton list describes them, or from kin, intermixed with the rest.

This is most obvious in the outstanding surviving example of recording New Year tenants' gifts, that of the Mores of Loseley in Surrey. Sir William More was an influential gentleman with excellent Court connections.⁷⁹ He had the dubious honour of entertaining Queen Elizabeth four times on progress. From 1561 until his death forty years later he solemnly recorded every New Year's gift, however large or small, separating this information from his regular accounts, and often numbering each item and adding the grand total at the end.⁸⁰ To take just one example, in 1569 More received gifts from 233 separate individuals, and the haul included 238 capons, 26 geese, 4 does, 4 pheasants, and 14 woodcock.⁸¹ And all of this was transcribed in his own hand, though he certainly had servants who could have accounted for these details. Sir William was succeeded by his son George, who never quite managed the obsessive accounting of his father, but maintained the family tradition of keeping a good record of gifts at the New Year season.⁸² The Loseley lists are dominated by the usual forms of tenurial giving, but these are not

⁷⁴ Norfolk Record Office, LEST, P6-8; BL, Harl. MS. 4782. It is interesting that when Alice Le Strange resumed her accounts in 1630, after a gap, she no longer differentiated rent, tithe, and gifts, but spoke of gifts. On her accounting methods see Whittle and Griffiths, *Consumption and Gender*, 28-35.

⁷⁵ NLW, Carreg-lwyd MS., ser. 1, 2293.

⁷⁶ Nottingham University Library, Mi/I/17/1.

⁷⁷ HHL, Hastings Papers, HAF Box 9 (8).

⁷⁸ Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, DR 18/3/24/338; 18/3/47/56.

⁷⁹ The estate had been purchased by his father, Sir Christopher, in 1508.

⁸⁰ SHC, LM 1327/1-27, 30

⁸¹ SHC, LM 1327/9.

⁸² SHC, LM 1327/11, 28-9, 33, 35; LM 1087/1/2. The oddity of the More archive, which is rich in correspondence and has much information about gifts at different seasons and in a variety of

divided by manor, and they are indiscriminately mixed with information about offerings made by family, friends, and connections like burgesses of Guildford. It must be assumed that Sir William was valuing these various presents in the same qualitative, if not quantitative, way, as emanating from the goodwill of the giver. However, there also seems to be in Sir William's behaviour a specific pride in the value of the presents given to him—value both in the sense of honour, and in immediate pecuniary wealth. This can be compared to Richard Stonley's record of his New Year's gifts in 1593. Stonley, a Teller of the Exchequer, was in serious financial trouble, and was caught between obvious anxiety about money and his attempts to be a good lord and neighbour on his rural estate of Doddington, Essex, and a subservient client to Burghley. So, he carefully noted the number and value of his gifts—£24 including a preserving pan for Burghley—and his receipts of food—12sh. Given his circumstances this was a costly way to maintain status.⁸³

In his *London and the Country Carbonadoed and Quartred* (1632) Donald Lupton offered a cynical, but revealing, interpretation of the relations between tenants and landlords at New Year. The former could not neglect 'the presentation of a gift', to which the proper response was a feast: 'Many fill their tenants bodies once, but empty their purses all yeare long. They take it for no small grace, when the groom, or the under-cook, or some such great officer, conveye them to the buttery to drink.' Lupton claimed that the merriment of the tenant feast was constrained by the obligation to seem grateful and that 'he seemes to be a courtier compleate, that hath the wit or the face to call for beere at the table'.⁸⁴ It was a brave tenant who demanded, as did the carollers in one sixteenth-century song, the right to have beer and ale in the lord's hall.⁸⁵ In general the New Year's festivities must have provided ideal circumstances for Bourdieu's notion that the gift had to be mystified in performance. John Smyth, the biographer of the Berkeley family, described how Henry, Lord Berkeley, would use the occasion of his tenant feast at the Christmas season to rise from his own table and 'going on each of their tables in the hall, cheerfully bid them welcome'.⁸⁶ The élite had to maintain hierarchy through this sort of temporary inversion (the Christmas season of misrule), and through a representation of their largesse as autonomous. It could not be seen to be elicited by initial acts of giving.

The tenant feast remained the main form of counter-giving in these exchanges. But the issue of 'reward' also looms large in the household accounts. Servants

circumstances, is that it has scarcely a mention of the New Year beyond the lists discussed here. In 1592 George Austen of Guildford sent him a New Year's gift as an expression of his gratitude, since More had helped him to an office in the Exchequer: SHC, LM/6729/7/90.

⁸³ Diary of Richard Stonley, vol. ii; FSL, MS. V. A. 460, fo.53^r and ^v. Stonley was imprisoned in the Fleet as a Crown debtor later in the 1590s.

⁸⁴ Donald Lupton, *London and the Country Carbonadoed and Quartred into Severall Characters* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1632), 109–11.

⁸⁵ Peter J. Seng (ed.), *Tudor Songs and Ballads from MS Cotton Vespasian A-25* (London: Harvard University Press, 1978), 110.

⁸⁶ John Smyth, *The Berkeley MSS: Lives of the Berkeleys*, ed. John Maclean, 3 vols. (Gloucester, John Bellows, 1883–5), ii, 381.

were rewarded with money for bringing gifts, and so in some circumstances were the individual tenants and dependents themselves. The idea of reward was already linguistically identifiable as that which was to be given to those who had served well. There was of course no exclusive correlation between these 'gifts' and the New Year, they were offerings for services rendered at any time. However, since New Year was the time of giving, much of the service was associated with that season. It must be stressed that rewards were almost invariably monetary—a few pence for bringing a hen or goose, several shillings for carrying a large animal such as a deer. This is in contrast to the gifts themselves, which were never recorded as being in the form of money, even if they were assigned a value. These monetary payments must have had their own implicit tariff, a sum that the recipient could reasonably expect, but they remained voluntary in that they were at the discretion of the giver: in parallel with our own understanding of the tip.⁸⁷ Mistakes could be made, pointing to the problems of calculus in what was supposed to be a gratuitous gesture. Lady Bridget Kingsmill, for example, rewarded the messenger who brought her New Year's gifts of venison, money, and fowl, from her son Sir William, with fifteen shillings, but found that he was 'scarcely content' with this sum.⁸⁸

The other form of reward was more explicitly initiated by the master or mistress, and illustrates Edward Thomas's argument that at this season superiors often gave to inferiors. This aspect of giving parallels the French *étrennes*: New Year's offerings of good omen, circulated to musicians, servants, and choirboys 'for the first day of the year'.⁸⁹ Polydore Vergil regarded these forms of giving as the commonest in Italy where 'the richest and most noble give to their inferiours'.⁹⁰ Vergil may have failed to notice this process in England, since homage gifts were so much more prominent, but there was no dearth of this form of generosity. In particular, household officers and lesser servants were given gratuities. These appear with great regularity as extraordinary payments in stewards' accounts. For example, in 1524 Katherine, Countess of Oxford, paid £3 10s to reward the officers of her household and in 1600 the Chatsworth servants received £4 3s 10d.⁹¹ Members of the royal household were rewarded not only by the monarch, but by great courtiers and office-holders.⁹² And, while the majority of our information derives from the records of the landed, there is no reason to suppose that this was not common practice across much of the society. At its apex all those who had significant connection with the royal household were supposed to reward its servants at New Year and account books

⁸⁷ The calculus of reward was complicated both by the status of the giver and the recipient: for example in the Countess of Derby's household accounts for 1634–5 rewards to those bringing New Year gifts seem to be standardized at 6d for a capon, but 2 shillings was given to the daughter of one of the seniors servants, who specifically presented pullets to both the countess and Lord Chandos: HHL, Hastings MS., Harefield Kitchen Accounts, 1634–5.

⁸⁸ HRO, Kingsmill MS, 1376.

⁸⁹ Davis, *The Gift*, 37.

⁹⁰ Vergil, *Works*, 194.

⁹¹ TNA, E36/223, fo. 43r; Chatsworth Estate Trustees, Devonshire MS. VIII/Bk 10a, fo. 130r.

⁹² Royal rewards were recorded in 'The King's Books of Payments', such as TNA, E36/216 and BL, Arundel MS. 97.

for the gentry also regularly record 'tips'.⁹³ These offerings, though they had, of course, the capacity to appear merely as an addendum to wages, were clearly intended to express thanks for service received, and to remind the recipient that further good was expected in the coming year. Specific charity towards the poor—receiving them into the household and dispensing food—takes the story across the whole culture.

The routines of New Year giving were not all posited upon asymmetrical relationships of power. In his *Liber Famelicus*, James Whitelocke, the Jacobean lawyer, chose to record the gifts he received each New Year. And, in his entry for 1613 he explained why he did so:

This I set downe *inter famelica* that my sun may hereafter see these friendly kindnesses doon to me, which ar not so usual to those that ly in London, as to those in the countrie, and that he may endeavour to live worthye of the like.⁹⁴

That year Whitelocke received a rich range of food from does to a piece of bacon, from family members including brothers, cousins, and his mother-in-law, plus gentlemen like Sir Henry Neville, with whom he spent part of the Christmas season. In the following years a similar group of relatives and friends helped to furnish his table, and he then also remembered to record his own gifts, though interestingly these were directed to senior members of the legal establishment.⁹⁵ Sir John Oglander also recorded the New Year's gifts offered to him, in 1622, he noted that the pleasant habit of making these offerings was more common in Sussex than the Isle of Wight, the latter being the 'basest' in England.⁹⁶ His gift-givers were a mixture of family and men of gentle status, with 'goodmen' and widows who were probably his tenants. When the reformer Thomas Becon chose to present one of his tracts of spiritual advice under the title *A New Yeares Gyfte More Precious than Golde* (1543), his dedication spoke of giving 'mutuall giftes in the begynnyng of a newe yeare,' to show that 'we desyre, that all good, lucky prosperous and foryunate thynges maye chaunse that yere unto every one of us'. These gifts were above all designed, thought Becon, 'for the preservation and conciliation of amite' among friends.⁹⁷ Thomas Tusser suggests that this was a widespread practice in the sixteenth century when he talks of people in general who 'gave many gifts' at the Christmas season.⁹⁸

⁹³ See for example Lady Verney's 1562 accounts, with a good list of such rewards: FSL, MS. V.b.107, fos. 3^r, 93^v.

⁹⁴ *Liber Famelicus of Sir James Whitelocke, a Judge of the Court of King's Bench*, ed. John Bruce, (London: Camden Society, os 70, 1856), 32.

⁹⁵ *Liber Famelicus of Sir James Whitelocke*, 45, 49. Whitelocke seems to have lost interest after 1616, though he continued to enjoy recording gifts for special occasions, such as his first reading as a benchler.

⁹⁶ Bamford, *A Royalist's Notebook*, 4–5.

⁹⁷ Becon published this work, like all his writings in the difficult late years of Henry VIII's reign under the pseudonym of Theodore Basil: *A New Yeares Gyfte more Precious than Golde, Worthy to be Embrased no Lesse Ioyfully than Tha[n]kfully of Every True Christe[n] Man, Newly Published by Theodore Basille* (London: John Mayler for John Gough, 1543), sig. A ii^v.

⁹⁸ Thomas Tusser, *Five Hundred Pointes of Good Husbandrie*, ed. W. Payne and S. J. Herrtage (London: English Dialect Society, 1878), 68.

Plenty of the food gifts noted in the household accounts came from colleagues, family, and friends rather than lesser dependents. The comfortable lifestyle of William More, last Prior of Worcester, was facilitated partly by generous giving from the townsmen of Worcester and Winchcomb, from fellow clerics and local gentlemen.⁹⁹ The lists of those who gave to Henry Sherfield, recorder of Salisbury, in the 1620s included local tradesmen—‘Crooknel the butcher’—colleagues in the city—the mayor, Alderman Hancock, the warden of the weavers—and family—‘my son Longe’, ‘cousin Chafin’, a godson.¹⁰⁰ Sir William Herrick’s list of tenant gifts from his estate at Beaumanor, Leicestershire, included offerings of brawn and pork from members of his family.¹⁰¹ Much the same mix can be detected in the Loseley lists. Townsmen of high status from Guildford jostled with the tenants, and with extended kin—‘my cousin Hill’, ‘Cousin Anthony Slaughter’, ‘my cousin Polsted’.¹⁰² The gifts given might vary but the assumption that near equals gave, and were not necessarily sharply differentiated from tenants, is common. The only obvious distinguishing mark in the More accounts was that immediate family, daughters, sisters, and occasionally sons-in-law, might give fabric and personally wrought goods rather than food. For example, Sir William’s son-in-law Polsted gave a velvet nightcap, two handkerchiefs, a silk kirtle cloth and a French hood in 1574.¹⁰³

It is rarely the case that both sides of these common exchanges can be traced, and in particular we know all too little of the process of counter-giving, rather than receiving. Did Sir William More or Henry Sherfield return the courtesies of their circle, or did they, like Whitelocke, apparently follow the convention of fructifying exchange by giving to those who were superior in status? There are examples of the mass purchase of gloves to give at New Year: John Willoughby of Leyhill House, Devon, bought thirteen pairs in 1611, and an extra pair explicitly to be given to his mother.¹⁰⁴ Since gloves were a standard offering at weddings and funerals this extension to the New Year is scarcely surprising. Or accountants would record a sum handed over for gifts. In the Chirk Castle accounts for the 1650s Lady Middleton was regularly handed £20 for New Year’s gifts, no doubt covering offerings to the household, but a large sum if it did not include more personal donations.¹⁰⁵ The Earl of Northumberland expended £43 on the New Year in 1575–6.¹⁰⁶ Bess of Hardwick gave money

⁹⁹ *The Journal of Prior William More*, ed. Ethel S. Fegan (Worcester Record Society, 1914), pt. 1, 77, 98, 203.

¹⁰⁰ HRO, 44 M69/L51/44–45; L51/3, 46.

¹⁰¹ John Nichols, *History and Antiquities of the Town and County of Leicester* 4 vols. (London: Nichols & Son, 1795–1811), III, i, 155.

¹⁰² These examples are all taken from the early 1560s: SHC LM 1327/1–3.

¹⁰³ SHC LM 1327/13.

¹⁰⁴ Todd Gray (ed.), *Devon Household Accounts, 1627–59*, (Exeter: Devon and Cornwall Record Society, ns 38, 1995), 250.

¹⁰⁵ William Martial Myddelton (ed.), *Chirk Castle Accounts A.D. 1605–1666* (St. Albans: Gibbs and Bamforth, 1908), 42, 62.

¹⁰⁶ Alnwick Castle: MS. U I, i, S.H. It is worth emphasizing how modest a sum this was in a total expenditure of £9700. Another way of putting this in perspective is that in the same year he lost £145 at cards while the Court was on progress at Kenilworth.

largely to her extended kin: in 1592 the whole, including some rewards to servants, amounted to £400.¹⁰⁷ At a more modest social level Henry Sherfield left his man Thomas Hony £11 with which to buy presents in 1629.¹⁰⁸ Elsewhere family correspondence sometimes indicates the exchange of gifts and, more interestingly, can indicate an *expectation* of giving and receiving between kin. When John Herrick wrote to his brother William at some unspecified date in the late sixteenth century he apologized that he could give no New Year's gift: 'yet I hope you will except [sic] my good [will] which as I have alwaies born yow good love so with the new year I mean to continew'.¹⁰⁹ At the apex of society the survival in the royal collection of Latin exercises that Mary Fitzalan, younger daughter of Henry, Earl of Arundel, prepared for her father at New Year, is an indication of another aspect of exchange that was expected at this season—gifts of loyalty and deference from children to parents that must have elicited counter-offerings of money and other valuables.¹¹⁰

Giving to friends as a general expression of goodwill was therefore already an established habit in the sixteenth century. How common it was in our period may be surmised from casual comments in the Herrick and Chamberlain correspondence. In 1605, Chamberlain asked Dudley Carleton, then in Paris, if he would light upon fabric and 'any other trinckets that may serve for newyearegifts'.¹¹¹ The Herricks, as a mercantile family, could find themselves at the other end of the exchange process. In January 1583, John in Leicester wrote to William in London, sending a little bone comb as a New Year's gift and hoping 'that your markets wear the better in selling of New Year gifts'.¹¹² So there is already the beginning of that all-too-familiar sense of the Christmas season as prime shopping time. However, as we have seen, there was nothing unique about the season for a close family like the Herricks: gifts were exchanged in a cycle that continued throughout the year.¹¹³

Was seasonal gift-exchange of this kind universally observed in families of sufficient affluence? The surviving evidence suggests that some who seemed as close as the Herricks made very little issue about giving to their family and kin. The correspondence of Lady Katherine Paston is silent on the subject, as are the Knyvett letters sent between husband in London and wife in East Anglia in the early seventeenth century.¹¹⁴ Rich correspondence from Wales passed between members of the Mostyn, Stradling, and Wynn families say little about the New Year.¹¹⁵ Ideological choice must often have played a part in this. We would not expect the godly Puritan Lady Hoby to make much of the Christmas season, and

¹⁰⁷ Chatsworth Estates Trust, Hardwick MS. Book VIII/7, fo. 14'.

¹⁰⁸ HRO, 44M69/125/3. ¹⁰⁹ Bodl., Eng. Hist. MS. c. 474, fo. 161'.

¹¹⁰ BL, Royal MS. 12. A, 1–IV.

¹¹¹ *Letters of Chamberlain*, ii, 212. It is interesting that Chamberlain on several occasions makes the New Year's gift into one composite word.

¹¹² Bodl, Eng. Hist. MS. c. 474, fos. 174^v–75'.

¹¹³ Bodl. Eng. Hist. MS. c. 474, esp. fos. 74'–84'.

¹¹⁴ *The Correspondence of Lady Katherine Paston, 1603–1627*, ed. Ruth Hughey (Norwich: Norfolk Record Society 14, 1941); *The Knyvett Letters, 1620–1644*, ed. B. Schofield (Norwich: Norfolk Record Society 20, 1949).

¹¹⁵ NLW, Gwysancy Letters and Papers, trans.; *The Stradling Correspondence: a Series of Letters Written in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. J. M. Traherne (London, 1840); NLW, Wynn Papers.

nor did the devout Lowther family of Cumbria in the later seventeenth century.¹¹⁶ In contrast Catholic families like the Petres had particular reason to try to cement relations with their tenants, and in consequence held great Christmases with gifts.¹¹⁷ However, the comments of Oglander and Whitelock suggest a nostalgia for a world of rural exchange that was vanishing and, with due allowance for some nostalgia on their part, the movement of the nobility and gentry to London for the winter season must have weakened the season of gifts. This trend accelerated in the early seventeenth century, despite the efforts of the governments of James I and Charles I to return the élites to the country.¹¹⁸

Giving to superiors outside the context of tenurial relationships will be considered later under the broad heading of political affinity, and client-patron bonds. Here, however, we should just note that the New Year became in the later sixteenth century the occasion when gifts could fairly safely be given to office-holders, and particularly to law officers. The fear was always that such giving was tainted: that it was a bribe. The excuse of the New Year was often, as we shall see, just that, but if interested giving could be drained of the poison of the bribe, it was most likely to happen at the season of gifts. From at least the 1580s the earls of Rutland regularly targeted their presents at the chief justices, and the Lord Keeper. Bess of Hardwick gave to 'Master Attorney' and the Earl of Northumberland to the Lord Chancellor and later the Lord Keeper.¹¹⁹ The City of London's routine in the same period was to give to the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Treasurer, and the Attorney-General.¹²⁰ The consequences can be seen from the perspective of the recipient in the careful accounts kept by Hugh Maynwaring, servant of Thomas Egerton, Lord Keeper from 1596 to 1617, of the plate his master received at the New Year, and what happened to it. The presents Egerton received were remarkable: 1603 brought 2108 ounces of silver and silver gilt; three years later there was 2278 ounces; in 1614, 2129 ounces of gilt, and 869 of 'white', that is, silver.¹²¹ The gifts were

¹¹⁶ *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby 1599–1605*, ed. Dorothy M. Meads (London: George Routledge, 1930), though she does in London, Christmas 1600, purchase one New Year's gift from the Royal Exchange: 160. *The Lowther Family Estate Books*, ed. C. B. Phillip (London: Surtees Society, 191, 1979). The latter source omits detail on the household, but has a wide range of family information, none of which points to gift-exchange.

¹¹⁷ Essex RO, D/DP/A12. Harington was convinced about the association between Catholicism and traditional housekeeping: most of the men who are praised for these virtues in *Ajax Metamorphos'd* are noted in the margins of his annotated Folger copy as Catholic; Gerard Kilroy, 'Sir John Harington's Protesting Catholic Gifts', *Downside Review*, 122: 426 (2004), 20–1.

¹¹⁸ On the impact of London on sociability and forms of giving see Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500–1700* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), 311–16; Felicity Heal, 'The Crown, the Gentry and London: the Enforcement of Proclamation 1596–1640', in Claire Cross, J. J. Scarisbrick, and David Loades (eds.), *Law and Government under the Tudors* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 211–26; Whyman, *Sociability and Power*, 22, 89–90.

¹¹⁹ *HMC, Rutland*, iv, 388, 413, 424, 430. Chatsworth Estates Trust, Chatsworth VIII/bk 5, fo. 19r. Alnwick Castle, MS. U.I.1, U.I.2, Pursebearers' Accounts, 1580–1, 1590–1.

¹²⁰ Betty R. Masters (ed.), *Chamber Accounts of the Sixteenth Century* (London: London Record Society 20, 1984), 48, 94.

¹²¹ HHL, Ellesmere MSS., Accounts nos. 102, 110, 115. By way of comparison, Elizabeth gave 4876 ounces of gilt plate at the New Year's exchange in 1598; Jane A. Lawson (ed.), *The Elizabethan New Year's Gift Exchanges 1559–1603* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 461.

always of plate, if money or other stuff was given it did not influence Maynwaring's accounts, and the management of the offerings was very business-like. Plate was given to be sold: a very short list of favoured items was set aside and then at sale sums of between £470 and £620 were made annually.

Finally there are also words as gifts that are specific to the Christmas season. Our habit of making New Year's resolutions may be the ghost of the early modern sense that the turn of the year provided a particularly suitable moment to propose change and amendment of life. This was the opportunity for the gift of good advice, to friends and family, to readers and, taking advantage of the license of the festival, from counsellors to monarchs. The frivolity of ordinary gift practices was challenged by powerful moralizing. Thomas Becon, as we have seen, used the occasion of the New Year for some gifts of spiritual counsel, and in 1571 Edward Wollay offered as a 'gift' to his readers *A New Yeres Gyft, intituled, A Playne Pathway to Perfect Rest*.¹²² For example, an early Elizabethan broadsheet survives showing a pair of gloves covered by, and surrounded by, text. The gloves list sins, on the left, and virtues on the right. The fingers show the Ten Commandments, and also incorporate a series of resolutions concerning future good behaviour (see Figure 3.1).¹²³

This notion that the New Year made serious and even distasteful advice legitimate became a standard justification within the publishing industry. Godly sermons and meditations used the festival to focus minds upon the need for repentance and the need for renewal of spiritual commitment.¹²⁴ By the later seventeenth century that stern genre of advice from parents to children, which had begun as patriarchal orders or admonitions, was also sometimes represented as New Year's gifts. Two tracts, in particular, gained fame: the Marquis of Halifax's *Advice to a Lady* and Mathew Hale's *The Father's New-Years-Gift to his Son*, between them sustaining the genre well into the eighteenth century.¹²⁵

There were already a plethora of pamphlets using the New Year as justification for commentary and warning in the Interregnum, and the Exclusion Crisis saw a flood of prints with alluring titles like *Another New-Years-gift for Arbitrary Judges*.¹²⁶ Those engaged in ideological conflicts cast their texts as advice or warning and insisted they were particularly suitable as a present at the New Year. How

¹²² Becon, *A New Yeares Gyfte*. Edward Wollay, *A New Yeres Gyft Intituled, A Playne Pathway to Perfect Rest: Gathered out of Sundry Godly Patriarkes and Prophets* (London: William How for Richard Johnes, 1571).

¹²³ 'Some fine gloves devised for New Year's gifts to teach young people to know good from evil', HHL, RB 18343.

¹²⁴ Typical is Edward Dering's sermon: *A Lecture or Exposition Upon a Part of the V. Chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrewes... Prepared and Geven for a New Yeres Gift to the Godly of London and Els where*, (London: John Awdely, 1573).

¹²⁵ George Savile, Marquis of Halifax, *The Lady's New-Years Gift, or, Advice to a Daughter* (London: Matthew Gillyflower & James Partridge, 1688); Mathew Hale, *The Father's New-Years-Gift to his Son* (London: William Booker, 1685).

¹²⁶ *A New-Years Gift for the Lord Chief in Justice Scggs [sic], Being Some Remarks on his Speech Made the First Day of Michaelmas Term, 1679* (London: 1679); *Another New-Years-Gift for Arbitrary Judges, or, Some Sober Reflections on Injustice* (London: 1681).

CONCLUSION TO OCCASIONS AND SEASONS

Writing to Robert Cecil, in 1596, Sir William Cornwallis referred to a small gift he had sent 'that might methinks be as well left as new year gifts'.¹²⁸ Obadiah Walker thought that Christmas beneficence was not valued because 'the day is thanked, not the giver'.¹²⁹ The disposition of contemporaries rhetorically to denigrate their material offerings could lead to a polemical claim that there was nothing in the process of giving except expense and self-interest. Modern laments about the cost, effort, and pointlessness of the Christmas season find their echoes in Tudor and Stuart society. Protector Somerset may have sought to curtail the New Year's ceremony in the early years of Edward VI's reign on these grounds, though political worries seem a more likely explanation.¹³⁰ The cultural practice of giving came under particular fire during the Civil War and Interregnum: one tract of 1647, raising the possibility of a university in London, pointed out that its sage advice to the aldermen and common council was far better than the 'Heathenish and Superstitious New-yeares gifts' they would normally receive.¹³¹ It is not entirely clear from the surviving evidence that even the affluent felt constrained to give gifts. But, while the material element in New Year's exchanges may have been less firmly grounded than in our own culture, the forms in which beneficence and generosity could and should be expressed were more diverse and compelling. New Year was above all the time for the affirmation of hierarchy and social order through the payment of homage, and also for its temporary inversion in the open feast. It was, on the one hand, the season for the articulation of social bonds, both vertical and horizontal, on the other it licensed the giving of criticism interwoven with affection and compliment. Plain speaking advice to the great was never easily presented in this culture: the New Year offered one opportunity for it to be articulated with relative impunity.

All seasonal and cyclical celebrations provided the opportunity for pause in the quotidian round, and with this came the chance to reassess social relationships and strengthen them through the use of the gift register. Much of this was the mere following of customary patterns expected of those who could give, or were required by loyalty and deference to do so. It required no deep insight into social bonding to give gloves at weddings and funerals, tenant food at New Year, or small presents to kin. But the New Year at least carried a much more complex freight of meaning, and offered more flexible possibilities for compliment and criticism than we might assume from a modern cultural

¹²⁸ HMC, *Salisbury*, vi, 498.

¹²⁹ Obadiah Walker, *Of Education* (Oxford: At the Theater, 1673), 258.

¹³⁰ Another, but less likely, possibility is that Somerset was attacking superstitious practices. For speculation on this see David Starkey, *Elizabeth: Apprenticeship* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2000), 85.

¹³¹ *Motives Grounded upon the Word of God, ---for the present Founding an University in the Metropolis London* (London: 1647).

perspective. The season therefore provides us with the key transition from the attempt to understand broad patterns of social behaviour into the study of the relationship between gifts, benefits, and power at the heart of the political system.

PART II

THE POLITICS OF GIVING

4

The Politics of Gift-Exchange under the Tudors

ROYAL GIVING AND EXCHANGE WITH THE ÉLITE

In chapter 10 of the first volume of *Leviathan* Hobbes offers a characteristically terse evaluation of the utility of largesse: 'Riches, joined with liberality, is Power, because it procureth friends and servants' and, later in the same chapter, 'to give great gifts to a man is to honour him; because it is buying of protection and acknowledging of power'.¹ In the Hobbesian universe there is no space for the nuances of a compromising language about the disinterested nature of generosity: gifts are defined as part of the rational behaviour in which they are traded for power; beneficence for control over men. This tough evaluation is far from much of the moralizing commentary considered in earlier chapters of this volume, and yet it still reveals a perception that personal and political power are inseparable in the mid-seventeenth century. If, for a moment, we accept a simplified model of polarity between the world of the gift and that of the market, or between the *ancien régime* and the modern State, then Hobbes's thought is clearly pre-modern.² We are entering an asymmetrical universe in which the realities of power move through systems of patronage and the bonds between men: and there are few more effective ways of expressing those realities than through the public articulation of generosity. Of course, these are simplified polarities. We have already acknowledged the fluidity of the concepts of market and the gift, and the story of political power in early modern England shows a similar interpenetration between the exercise of personal authority by the Crown with the growth of the State as an abstract entity.

Linda Levy Peck has argued aptly that power relations in early modern England operated within a system of both general exchange—the establishment of connection through the moralized vision of bonds represented by gift-giving, hospitality, and a broad understanding of patronage—and specific exchange involved in

¹ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Michael Oakshott (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1960), pt 1, ch.10, pp. 56, 58.

² This is the first part of a chapter that harps remorselessly on the theme of power and uses very explicit 'market' language for the idea of worth, which is of all things a man has 'his price' dependent on the need of other men to purchase him as commodity.

patron–client connection. The latter traded in part within a market model of what could be given or received, while invoking the language of beneficence.³ In principle the two systems could coexist, but to do so the figure at the heart of the political system had to be able to manage (and indeed manipulate) towards a measure of consensus within an inherently competitive structure. In principle the monarch and her or his greater subjects shared the same essential understanding of the significance of the gift in this schema. It was the mark of affect, the demonstration of fidelity, and the public expression of honour in a system which privileged personal relationships above all others. Nobles, councillors, gentlemen, and townsmen all expected to give, and also in proper circumstances to receive. This broadly corresponds to what Davis calls the gift register, and Berking the norms of exchange behaviour.

Most men of power expected to give to, and receive from, the monarch. But behaviour appropriate to the Crown within the gift register was qualitatively different to that between subjects. Magnificence was the hallmark of all nobles: majesty the attribute of princes. The language of medieval politics had always acknowledged both the pragmatic and the ideological importance of generosity. Henry III had had the motto ‘he who does not give what he has, will not get what he wants’ painted on the walls of his palace.⁴ This required above all the representation of beneficence: one of the Erasmian apophthegmes not quoted earlier is ‘bountie and largesse is befallyng for Kynges’.⁵ This was echoed later by James VI/I in his comment in *Basilikon Doron* ‘use true liberality in rewarding the good and bestowing frankly for your honor and weal’: even then he wisely avoided either m. word [majesty and magnificence].⁶ However, the arts of political management demanded far more than the presentation of a paradigm of openness. When Cardinal Richelieu came to reflect upon statecraft in his *Testament Politique*, he explicitly rejected the Senecan idea that unsolicited gifts or favours by a prince were the best method of binding great subjects to himself. Instead service should be recompensed with reward, which was a matter of desert and therefore not a gift in the strictest sense.⁷

The ‘weal’ of a prince was distinct from that of even his greatest subject, and the political challenges of giving correspondingly greater. Montaigne thought

³ Linda Levy Peck, ‘“For a King Not to be Bountiful were a Fault”: Perspectives on Court Patronage in Early Stuart England’, *Journal of British Studies* 25 (January, 1986), 33–6. The theoretical approach to patron–client relations used by Linda Levy Peck derives from S. N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger, ‘Patron–client Relations as a Model of Structuring Social Exchange’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22: 1 (January, 1980), 42–77. David Wootton has shown how a careful reading of Francis Bacon’s essays on friendship underline the important contrast between personal affinity and clientage in this culture: ‘Francis Bacon: Your Flexible Friend’, in John H. Elliott and Lawrence W. B. Brockliss (eds.), *The World of the Favourite* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 185–204.

⁴ Richard W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (London: Penguin, 1970), 112.

⁵ *Apophthegmes, that is to say Prompte Quicke, Wittie and Sentencious Saiynges. First Gathered by Erasmus*, trans. Nicholas Udall (London: Richard Grafton, 1542), fo. 215’.

⁶ *The Political Works of James I*, ed. Charles Howard McIlwain (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918), 42.

⁷ Orest Ranum, ‘Words and Wealth in the France of Richelieu and Mazarin’, in Elliott and Brockliss, *World of the Favourite*, 129–31. This was essentially the position Bodin had adopted in his

expectation of royal largesse was so large that the king could not escape prodigality, men's expectations 'being directed not according to the measure of the present, but according to the qualitie of his [the ruler's] meanes'.⁸ Nevertheless, visible generosity was central to early modern kingship: 'for the king not to be bountiful were a fault', said the Earl of Salisbury, in 1610, when required to defend against charges of extravagance.⁹ And if liberality was seen to fail, then the gratitude of subjects/clients, which was integral to political loyalty as well as to the operation of exchange, would itself be at risk. 'Noe sovereign,' said the 1608 'Book of Bounty', 'can be without service, nor service without reward.'¹⁰ At no point in the two centuries of Tudor and Stuart rule could the prince/princess neglect her or his role at the heart of the patronage system, and the gift both material and symbolic remained a key expression of the success or failure of political control. While the rhetorical frame of giving moved from good lordship, through humanist articulation of friendship and Senecan beneficence, to the colder language of neo-Stoicism, the need for the presentation of generosity and proper reward remained constant. Corruption was an inherent part of the system of patronage and personal loyalty: its central peril. But in a book about gifts the investigation of the corrosive power of corruption first needs to be understood in the light of the role that contemporaries expected gifts to play in binding subjects to their monarch, and in facilitating patronage relationships.

Royal giving and receiving should ideally be performative, as part of those gestures of majesty which in some senses include all of courtly cultural behaviour—hospitality, entertainment, and ritual. There are, however, moments when the monarch transcended the courtly round of giving and receiving, to display the power of the gift in a direct relationship with his or her people. There are two important representations of the power of royal giving that book-end our period. The greatest of all gifts was the Word of God, and a key moment in the Henrician Reformation was the donation of the vernacular scriptures by a gracious monarch to his people. The famous title-page of the Great Bible (1539) is a remarkable example of the circulation of benefits through the gift. God presides while Henry, seated in majesty, dispenses the book to Cranmer and Cromwell, they to the clerical and lay elites, who provide it to the people via preaching, but also to their hands. The laity in the lower images praise not the Word itself, rather the king with '*vivat rex*' and 'God save the king' (see Figure 4.1).

From Charles II's reign comes another image of the king in majesty, in this case touching sufferers from scrofula, the so-called 'king's evil', which was believed to be cured by the divinely ordained power of rulers (see Figure 4.2). It was a gift to

Republique: the monarch should only reward the worthy, though for him this automatically included those worthy by blood as well as service: Davis, *The Gift*, 161–3.

⁸ Michel de Montaigne, *Essays Written in French by Michael Lord of Montaigne*, trans. John Florio (London: Melchior Bradwood for Edward Blount and William Barret, 1613), 507.

⁹ This is the Earl of Salisbury's defence of James's lavish spending, made in the parliament of 1610. Elizabeth Read Foster (ed.), *Proceedings in Parliament, 1610*, 2 vols. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), i, 6.

¹⁰ TNA, SP14/37/72.



Fig. 4.1 Henry VIII Gives the Great Bible. Frontispiece.

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their people performed by all English monarchs, though elevated to a central ritual of kingship above all, by Charles.¹¹

Grace and gratitude attend these ceremonies: the gift is quasi-divine in that spiritual enlightenment and health are gifts that cannot be recompensed. But the gift could be fructified by the loyalty to the monarch that flowed from prayers of thanks.

¹¹ Anna Keay, *The Magnificent Monarch: Charles II and the Ceremonies of Power* (London: Continuum, 2008), 112–19, 192–4. The image of the healing ceremony is the frontispiece of John Browne, *Adenochoiradelogia: or an Anatomick-Chirurgical Treatise of Glandules & Strumaes, or Kings-evil-swellings* (London: Thomas Newcomb for Sam Lowndes, 1684).



Fig. 4.2 Charles II Touches for the King's Evil. Frontispiece, John Browne, *Adenochoirade logia* (1684).

© Bodleian Library.

Such extraordinary moments extend the concept of reciprocity: more normally the monarch exercised the power of patronage and its accompanying generosity at the heart of his or her Court. Performance here involved both giving and receiving, gestures of gratitude, and protestations of service as inherent parts of the asymmetrical arrangement of power. It is often difficult to isolate the particularity of gifting from the generality of these gestures, and is indeed artificial to do so if we seek to establish its significance.¹² They were all a part of what Bourdieu memorably called a 'gentle, invisible form of violence' in which honour is bound up in

¹² As good examples of the full integration of gift-exchange into the study of royal power see David Starkey (ed.), *Henry VIII: a European Court in England* (London: Collins and Brown, 1991); Linda Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England* (London: Routledge, 1990).

the giving and receiving of benefits.¹³ It is important, however, not to move to the other extreme and discuss the presentation of royal power without proper attention to giving.¹⁴ A book on gift practices should indeed seek to compensate for the relative silence on this issue of Court studies on cultural performance, and to look at royal offerings in a particularly focused way. So we need to study closely some of the contexts in which gifts to and from the monarch *were* publicly visible. They are, we might say, the occasions when the script was recognized most clearly by the participants and an explicit value placed on the material gifts, which both revealed formal, and often cloaked actual, motives. In these exchanges the monarch had to play to several different audiences: internally to the political élite focused upon the Court, and also to a wider group of men of influence in local government and commerce; externally to other princes and their ambassadors. There were many occasions for the performance of generosity between king and subjects, but two that are most accessible in these centuries—royal progress and public appearance, and New Year's giving at Court.

NEW YEAR IN THE ROYAL COURT

The prince was the ultimate source of all largesse and beneficence, and the grand exchange that took place each New Year at the Tudor and early Stuart Court provided the opportunity to make the vision of the loyalty of subjects and the generosity of kings tangible. We have seen that Polydore Vergil and others associated offerings of this kind with the Roman practice of giving to the emperor on the Kalends of January. But the more obvious root of the practice must be the demonstration of loyalty required of tenants-in-chief, most conveniently offered at a time when the Court was *en fête*, as the king kept his Christmas with great ceremony. In the case of the English monarchy, records of 'great Christmases' go back to the early days after the Conquest, and are a routine feature of chronicle and official records from the time of Henry II onwards.¹⁵ Solemn courts were usually held at Easter, Pentecost, and All Saints as well, but as ever it was the Christmas season that was identified with giving. Two of the early mentions of gifts come in the distinctive context of Henry III's French wars. In 1249, the king was said to have extracted New Year's offerings from the citizens of London, and in 1254 Queen Eleanor sent 500 marks from her own revenues to help her

¹³ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. R. Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 192.

¹⁴ As does Kevin Sharpe in his studies of the royal image, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in Sixteenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2007) and *Image Wars: Promoting Kings and Commonwealths in England 1603–1660* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2010).

¹⁵ Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, (London: 1587), online edn., 6 vols. <<http://www.english.ox.ac.uk/holinshed>> vi, 43, 67, 107, 113, 269. When Henry II kept his Christmas at Nantes in 1170: 'all the great lords and barons of Britaine resorted to him', 75.

husband.¹⁶ By the fourteenth century something like the later formality of giving was already established and recorded in the Wardrobe accounts, though these, of course, note principally the royal counter-gift. In January 1316, for example, Edward II paid out £334 18s 11d for New Year's gifts, and this sort of sum appears with great regularity in the later wardrobe records.¹⁷ There is a detailed description of the organization of the ceremony in the Household Ordinances of 1494, though only in the reign of Henry VIII does the full elaboration of gifting become visible with lists of presents given and received for 1532, 1534, and 1539. Thereafter an increasingly rich series of royal rolls—twenty-five for Elizabeth's reign of forty-four years—document the New Year's exchanges.¹⁸

The origin of the New Year's ceremony in obligatory acts of homage remained visible both in the order of giving and in the nature of those involved. Since the monarch was the ultimate fount of all benefit, the priority in gifting might be assumed to lie in his or her hands. But the practice of the Court, and the mode in which it was recorded in the rolls, show that it was the subject who offered the gift, countervailed by the reward returned by the Crown.¹⁹ Through giving, subjects showed that they were incorporated into the personal service of the Crown, and a part of the royal body: the counter-gift affirmed this.²⁰ The consequence, at least in the sixteenth century, was to provide the subject with the opportunity for conspicuous prestation, while the monarch closed the exchange with Jewel House treasure.²¹ The tenants-in-chief—dukes, earls, barons, and bishops—were constrained to make an offering to the monarch at the New Year. The greatest of their wives or widows might also offer, especially if they had some attachment to the Court. This aspect of the ceremony was fixed in its substance and meaning. These great men did not necessarily have to be present to provide their gifts: messengers could be dispatched with money, plate, or other gifts, and could return with the approved offering from the monarch. Royal control over the political élite

¹⁶ Arthur Robinson Wright, *British Calendar Customs: England*, 3 vols. (London: Folklore Society, 1936–40), ii, 24. Holinshed, *Chronicles*, ii, 430.

¹⁷ Malcolm Vale, *The Princely Court: Medieval Courts and Culture in North-West Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 237.

¹⁸ *A Collection of Ordinances and Regulations for the Government of the Royal Household, made in Divers Reigns* (London: John Nichols, 1790), 120; Maria Hayward, 'Gift Giving at the Court of Henry VIII: the 1539 New Year's Gift Roll in Context', *Antiquaries Journal* 85 (2005), 125–75. All work on the Elizabethan lists has been superseded by the new edition of the rolls: Jane A. Lawson (ed.), *The Elizabethan New Year's Gift Exchanges 1559–1603* (Oxford: British Academy Records of Social and Economic History, ns. 51, 2013). Both the careful record kept of gifts given and received, and the fact that after 1552 (or possibly earlier) they were recorded on parchment not paper, are indications of the growing importance of the New Year ceremony.

¹⁹ Lisa Klein, in her article 'Your Humble Handmaid: Elizabethan Gifts of Needlework', *Renaissance Quarterly* 50 (1997), 467–8, argues for the priority of the queen in giving. This is no doubt conceptually correct, but the relatively flexible ability of the subject to offer, and the Crown being obliged to receive and re-present in practice gives the New Year's exchanges a very different dynamic. The 1494 Ordinances for the Royal Household makes it clear that the movement of the gift was from subject to ruler: 120.

²⁰ For similar examples from Indian culture see Harry Liebersohn, *The Return of the Gift* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 22.

²¹ James I did much to reverse this process in the early years of his reign: see Chapter 5.

meant that personal fealty and loyalty, while remaining important, did not have to be tested in regular ceremonial with quite the same urgency as it had been in earlier centuries. Royal servants were the key participants: those courtiers in immediate attendance on the monarch in the Privy Chamber or part of the household of magnificence all seem to have provided gifts, as did at least the heads of departments in the household of service—chief cooks, butlers, and the like. The rest were a miscellany: difficult to categorize and sometimes difficult to identify, but including some of those who supplied the royal household, foreign visitors, and gentry with no particular courtly connections. All were candidates for the reward of the monarch's counter-gift. In the first half of the sixteenth century, gifting could extend further down the social order. In Henry VIII's household book for the early years of the reign there are regular rewards at New Year for ordinary men and women who brought capons, apples, cakes, and the like for the king.²² These ordinary citizens did not receive plate from the Jewel House, presumably because they were both outside the community of honour and that of personal service.

The nature of these lists is best conveyed by looking at the donors through one specific example drawn from the reign of Edward VI. Only one roll apparently survives for these years: that for 1551–2. In that year Edward received gifts from all the earls and barons: the senior nobleman, the Duke of Norfolk, was in prison and scarcely in a position to participate. Fifteen bishops, the maximum possible, offered, as did ten of the wives or widows of peers. The knights are a roll call of household officials, but also of other government servants such as ambassadors: Sir William Cecil is prominent as secretary, Sir Philip Hoby as a former ambassador, Sir Walter Mildmay as treasury official, and there are thirty-four names in all. Five royal chaplains feature on the list, led by the almoner, Dr Richard Cox. Then there are a small group of gentlewomen, who were royal servants, including the king's nurse and laundress and Mrs Lavinia Teerline, the painter and miniaturist.²³ A vast list of gentlemen follows, and here again the range of status and connection with the Crown is very diverse. Some of the senior lawyers, for example the Master of the Rolls, head the list, gentlemen ushers of the Chamber appear, as does William Thomas, Clerk of the Privy Council. The list then descends to Harris, fruiterer, and Henry Arnold, shoemaker, via the sergeant of the pastry and the master cook. Among the rest are Richard Grafton, the royal printer, and Reyner Wolfe, the publisher, who was later to be famed as the begetter of Holinshed's *Chronicles*. There are musicians, clerics, and Italians and other strangers on the list. And finally at the end comes a group of gardeners, dog keepers, grooms, and other lesser servants.²⁴ This last group were rewarded directly by the Treasurer of the Chamber.

²² BL, Add. MS. 21481, fos. 20^r, 50^r, 78^r, 279^v. See also the 1521 gift roll: *LP*, III: ii, 3694, p.153.

²³ Roy C. Strong, *The English Renaissance Miniature* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1983), 54–64. In 1552, Teerline was paid £10 for 'counterfaying his Matie phisyauyne': TNA, E101/426/8.

²⁴ TNA, C47/3/54. The document is in a poor state of repair, so it is not possible to enumerate the lesser donors with any accuracy. On Mary I's better-preserved list for 1557 there were eighty-six names under the heading of 'gentleman': BL, Add. MS. 62525. This list is printed in David Loades, *Mary Tudor: A Life* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 358–69.

Since a significant proportion of those who appear on the royal New Year's lists had limited choice in the *matter* of giving it might be assumed that the *manner* of offering was peculiarly important. The performative element in gift-giving seems ideally suited to the rather terrifying stage of the Tudor Court. And there is some evidence that this was so. In the 1494 Household Ordinances the ceremony is described as relatively simple: the Usher of the Chamber admitted messengers to the king's bedchamber bearing gifts, and the Chamberlain was then instructed by the king to reward them properly by rank.²⁵ Things had changed by the 1530s. The correspondence of Arthur, Lord Lisle, the Deputy of Calais, includes several well-known comments from his servants about the New Year's ceremony. Lisle could never be at Court, and was in a constant state of anxiety about his political reputation, so looked for indicators of esteem with a paranoid eye. In January 1534 his man of business, John Husee, reported that Henry had received the latest gift 'right joyfully' after it had been presented by two men of the Privy Chamber, Francis Bryan and Anthony Kingston. Kingston apparently accompanied the gift with a small speech, assuring the king that, though Lisle was far off, 'yet he doth not forget you'. And Husee completed his little dramatic picture by the comforting observation that Henry sent his thanks to his uneasy deputy.²⁶ Four years later Husee felt confident enough to act in person for his master, and gave the most vivid description we possess of the atmosphere in the Court:

The king stood leaning against the cupboard, receiving all things: and Mr Tywke at the end of the same cupboard, penning all things that were presented; and behind his Grace stood Mr Kyngston and Sir John Russell, and besides his Grace stood the earl of Harforde and my lord Privy Seal [Thomas Cromwell].²⁷

In both this and the next year Cromwell identified Husee and singled him out for the king, saying 'this is my Lord Lisle's man', thereby once again enabling Henry to make gracious remarks about having the Lord Deputy in remembrance.²⁸ Husee treats the actual gift as a token, as evidence that the king can be moved above all by the form of presentation. On the only occasion when a Lisle servant mentions the royal counter-gift he does so again in terms of the importance of how it is conveyed to Calais, rather than its actual nature. Thomas Broke reports at the end of 1534 that John Gough has the royal gift in his hands, and comments that Lisle must be considered a man of high honour, since there was intense competition to deliver the cup to Calais: a task finally entrusted to one of the other servants.²⁹ When Sir George Lawson did not receive his New Year's gift in 1537 he was sufficiently worried to check with Cromwell that he had not caused offence.³⁰

Modest concerns of this kind convey little sense of the importance of the New Year's ceremony. In the traumatic decade of the 1530s gifts could be used as much more significant and challenging gestures. Eustace Chapuys, the Imperial Ambassador, had acute political antennae and watched the rituals of New Year for signals of favour and disfavour. In the final year of Katherine of Aragon's resistance

²⁵ *Collection of Ordinances*, 120.

²⁶ *LP*, VII, 24.

²⁷ *LP*, XIII: i, 24.

²⁸ *LP*, XIV: i, 15.

²⁹ *LP*, VII, 1587.

³⁰ *LP*, XII: i, 968.

to her husband, 1532, Chapuys reported that the queen's gift of a gold cup to Henry had been declined with anger, though the king admired the workmanship. The monarch returned it to Katherine, and sent no gift himself, not even offerings to the ladies of the queen and Princess Mary as was customary.³¹ Anne Boleyn by contrast received a room hung with cloth of gold. Nearly a decade later it was the turn of Anne of Cleves to manipulate New Year's gifts, and Chapuys was on hand to observe. In 1541, Anne sent Henry two large horses with their trappings, literally it seems stalking horses in this case. She came in person to Hampton Court, with a small retinue, and proceeded to upstage Katherine Howard by her modest demeanour and acquiescence in the new marriage. Katherine made some attempt to handle the conventions of gifting by giving Anne a ring and two small dogs, presumably as tokens of favour. All this clearly fascinated the ambassador, though his serious attention was given to the exchanges led by Princess Mary. She initiated a process of reconciliation by sending gifts to Henry and Katherine: magnificent presents were returned by both, and 'the king was extremely delighted'.³² The following year Chapuys concluded that Henry would not take Anne back after Katherine Howard's execution, and their gift-exchange only consisted of cloth from Anne and 'some glass pots and flagons' from Henry.³³

Thomas Cromwell was equally alert to the significance of New Year's giving. As Master of the Jewel House he had responsibility for dispensing the relevant royal plate and may possibly have initiated the new form of recording gifts. He also advised Henry on what Anne Boleyn was to offer as gifts, how presents to the disgraced Katherine of Aragon should be handled, and what was appropriate for the infant Prince Edward in 1537.³⁴ The care with which the royal lists were kept from the 1530s onwards would also suggest that the New Year's exchange was considered an important test of loyalty and service. The way in which the monarch chose to receive the presents must also have provided useful signals of favour or disfavour. Gifts were displayed, perhaps simply hierarchically, but more likely to show varying levels of royal appreciation. Henry VIII and Elizabeth both displayed their presents in a special chamber and carpenters were employed to construct temporary buffets on which they could be set out.³⁵ Even with care and calculation, however, subjects could not be wholly assured of impact. When Husee gave Lisle's gift to Henry VIII in 1538 he noted that 'there was but a small court' surrounding the king, perhaps because of the death of Jane Seymour. In 1548, as we have seen, the Duke of Somerset contemplated cancelling the whole courtly exchange, probably because of the political tensions associated with the behaviour of his brother, Thomas Seymour.³⁶ The specific reasons are less important than the

³¹ *LP V*, 696. Chapuys observed that Henry retained the gift for a day, since he feared that the individual who had brought it would return it to Katherine's messenger, who in turn might publicly present it to 'the other', who could not refuse it. 'The other' here must be Anne.

³² *CSP Sp*, 1538–1542, 305–6.

³³ *CSP Sp*, 1538–1542, 465–6.

³⁴ Among William Body's listing of Cromwell's records in 1535 is the 'Book of New Year's gifts to and by the King': *LP*, IX, 234; *LP*, VI, 1194, 1382; XII: ii, 1151.

³⁵ Hayward, '1539 Gift Roll', 127; Lawson, *New Year's Gift Exchange*, 14–15.

³⁶ The two sources for this move are letters of William Paget and of Princess Elizabeth. The former rushed to produce an 'advice' gift when the blanket ban was lifted; the latter acknowledged in a

fact that an insecure regime of a child monarch could abandon a ceremony that seemed calculated to consolidate its influence.

The Edwardian caesura is unique: the monarchy normally had every reason to promote the courtly ritual. And, though the manner of giving by subjects was crucial, the content of the present had to match the magnificence of the prince. So gifts of great value and ostentation were already expected by Henry VIII. Nobles and their wives gave elaborate standing salts, cups, and basins, in gold and silver gilt, often badged with the royal arms.³⁷ Hans Holbein designed a fountain and a clock salt to be given to the king by Anne Boleyn and Anthony Denny respectively (see Figure 4.3).³⁸

Elizabeth was even more attuned to the distinctive and glamorous, so great ingenuity went into the selection and production of her gifts. These ran the gamut from the handmade provision of clothing and handkerchiefs by ladies of the Chamber, to the extraordinary jewels with which ministers and favourites honoured her.³⁹ In 1585, to take a characteristic year for these latter gifts, the Earl of Leicester gave a gold chain and key with a 'porringer' of blood stone garnished with gold; the Earl of Warwick, a chain of fishes with garnets and emeralds; and Sir Christopher Hatton a headdress made with seven pieces of gold, with crowns imperial.⁴⁰ The jewels were not only rich offerings, they could encode messages: thus Hatton's crown imperials indicated his interest in overseas expansion, while Philip Sidney's jewelled whip, given in 1581, sought to avert further royal displeasure. Such great gifts were intended, by their value and complexity, to disrupt the balance of the formal exchange, giving more than the Crown expected to return. Extravagance of this kind served to create disequilibrium between subject and monarch, reminding the recipient that the formal closure of the gift-cycle did not represent the end of the duty of royal generosity.⁴¹

The gift-books drawn in elegant scribal hands, or distinctively bound, are an important subcategory of these endeavours.⁴² Some fine Henrician examples include

letter to her brother that it was wise to abandon costly gifts: 'The Letters of William, Lord Paget of Beudesert, 1547-63', ed. Barrett L. Beer and Sybil Jack, *Camden Miscellany* 25 (London: Camden Society 4th ser. 13, 1974), 19-20; Mary Anne Everett Wood (ed.), *Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies of Great Britain*, 3 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1846), ii, 222-3. The accounts of the Treasurer of the Chamber reveal some of the confusion caused by the intended ban. In 1547 the list of rewards distributed at New Year runs to four folios: in the following year to two and a half, and most of the entries are of the usual rewards to the royal household. Less than half the bishops apparently sent gifts, only three earls and no members of the extended royal family. TNA, E101/426/5, fos. 63r-66r; 426/6, fos. 30r-32r.

³⁷ On the importance of badging this silver see Philippa Glanville, *Silver in England* (London: V. & A., 1987), 24-5.

³⁸ For a description of some of the Henrician New Year's gifts see Starkey, *Henry VIII: A European Court*, 126-35.

³⁹ For extensive discussion of the complexity of gifts of clothing and jewels to Elizabeth see Janet Arnold, *Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd: the Inventories of the Wardrobe of Robes Prepared in July 1600* (Leeds: Maney, 1988), 104-10.

⁴⁰ BL, Egerton MS. 3052. Lawson, *New Year's Gift Exchange*, 353, 277.

⁴¹ Klein, 'Your Humble Handmaid', 459-66.

⁴² James P. Carley, *The Books of King Henry VIII and his Wives* (London: British Library, 2004), 53-80; James P. Carley, 'The writings of Henry Parker, Lord Morley: a bibliographical survey', in Marie

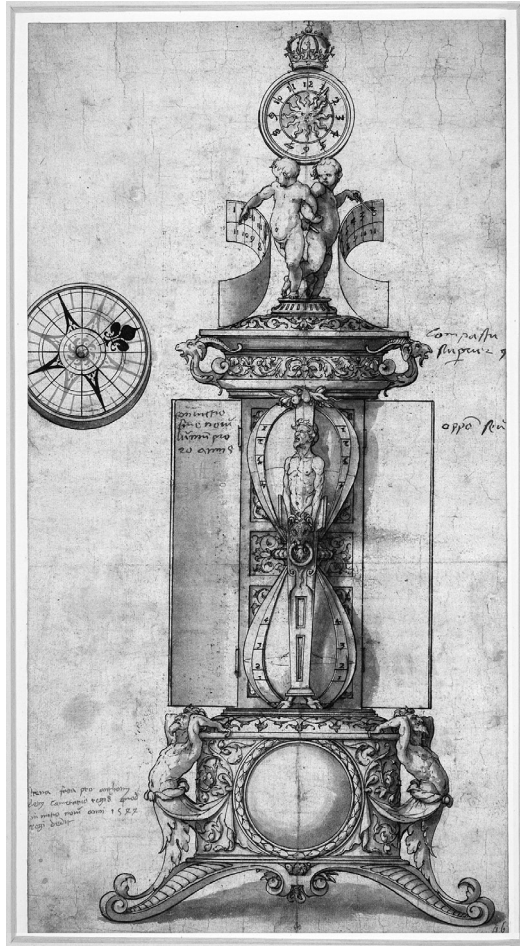


Fig. 4.3 Hans Holbein. Drawing of a Salt for Anthony Denny's New Year's Gift to Henry VIII.
© The Trustees of the British Museum.

the famous illustrated psalter by Jean Maillart, and Jean Rotz's 'Boke of Idrography'.⁴³ Elizabeth, whose attitude to New Year's gifts was formed in the humanistic environment of the Henrician Court, followed this pattern in her own translations and scribal renderings for Katherine Parr, Henry VIII, and Edward VI.⁴⁴ Her enthusiasm

Axton and James P. Carley (eds.), *'Triumphs of English': Henry Parker Lord Morley* (London: British Library, 2000), 27–68; Lawson, 'Remembrance of the New Year'.

⁴³ Bodl., Bodley MS. 883; BL, Royal MS. 20.B.XII. For a full discussion of Henry VIII's gift books see James P. Carley, *The Libraries of Henry VIII* (London: Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues 7, 2000).

⁴⁴ Katherine Parr's *Prayers or Meditations*, translated into French, Latin, and Italian, BL, Royal MS. 7.D.X; Marguerite of Navarre, *The Mirror of the Sinful Soul*, Bodl., Cherry MS. 36; Bernardino Ochino, *Sermon on the Nature of Christ*, Bodl., Bodley MS., 6.

for elegantly bound volumes, alongside the more obvious clothes and jewels, provided useful leverage for those beyond the immediate circle of courtiers who sought her attention. In 1585, Christopher Barker, the royal printer, gave a large Bible in English covered in velvet and bound with jewels, and two Italians books of Latin verses with ornamentation; in 1597, Peter Ubaldino offered a book in Italian bound with vellum.⁴⁵ George Gascoigne offered his manuscript of the *Tale of Hemetes* at New Year 1576, and had it illustrated with his kneeling figure offering it too intimately to an isolated queen: though this was surely the antithesis of what was possible in the circumstances of the crowded festival.⁴⁶ The Presence Chamber must have been as far as authors such as this could hope to reach. George Puttenham, in one of his literary presents, complained to Elizabeth:

Gracious Princesse, Where Princes are in place
To geve you gold, and plate, and perles of price
It seemeth this day, save your royall advice
Paper praesentes, should have but little grace.⁴⁷

Often particular gifts were set aside to be retained by the prince in person rather than handed to appropriate officers. In 1557, Mary kept small paintings of Charles V and her husband given by Sir Henry Neville, and a map of England with the royal arms given by Sir John Mason. In 1565, Elizabeth kept jewels from the Marquis of Northampton, Lord Lumley, and Sir Thomas Benger, and an elaborate prayer book from Cecil.⁴⁸ Her retention of gold toothpicks in 1575 reminds us of her dental problems. The queen was also notably adept at using gifts of this kind in demonstrations of her favour. In 1580, the Earl of Hertford noted in his diary that Elizabeth greeted him at Court showing him 'the last year's New Year's gift hanging at her girdle'.⁴⁹ Philip Howard, Earl of Surrey, had to be content with the assurance that she would have worn his girdle had she not already put on the one given her by Christopher Hatton.⁵⁰

Even the formulaic patterns of giving by the Crown had utility. The rolls always included a category of 'free gifts' for the monarch to give to those who had not offered in their turn. The young of the Court, the henchmen, and the maids in waiting, were rewarded like this, and others were sometimes added as if in personal choice. At the other extreme, Elizabeth felt free to reward favourites like the Earl of Leicester and Christopher Hatton well beyond the routine calculations of the rest of the gift register.⁵¹ And the Jewel House lists tell only part of the story. They omit, for example, the extraordinary jewel given the queen by Leicester in

⁴⁵ BL, Egerton MS. 3052. TNA, C47/Bundle 3/40.

⁴⁶ George Gascoigne, frontispiece to the *Tale of Hemetes*. BL, Royal MS.18.A.XLVIII, fo. 1. The text is discussed in Gabriel Heaton, *Writing and Reading Royal Entertainments: from George Gascoigne to Ben Jonson*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 30–43.

⁴⁷ BL, Cott. MS. Vespasian E.VIII, fo. 169r. Quoted in Heaton, *Royal Entertainments*, 37.

⁴⁸ BL, Add. MS. 62525; TNA, C47/Bundle 3/38.

⁴⁹ HMC, *Bath*, iv, 185.

⁵⁰ FSL, MS. L.d.880.

⁵¹ A spectacular example is the 400 ounces of plate given to Hatton in 1585, when other knights received less than fifty ounces: Lawson, *New Year's Gifts*, 361. We know from Leicester's New Year's account that in 1564 his gift from Elizabeth was worth £400: BL, Add. MS. 78172.

1571, described by the Spanish ambassador as showing Elizabeth on a throne with the Queen of Scots in chains.⁵² The roll is lost for 1602, when the ninth Earl of Northumberland deviated from his usual gifts and laid out £326 in jewels and clothing.⁵³ The complexities of Northumberland's position after the Essex rebellion probably explains his need for reassurance of royal favour. Moreover, the rolls obviously cannot reveal the language and gesture of giving. Three Francis Bacon letters which accompanied his presents in the last years of the reign are full of carefully formulated praise, but also resentment about his position: 'I cannot fly because I am tied to another's wrist'.⁵⁴

So the season legitimated competitive displays of loyalty and obeisance by subjects, while allowing the prince to incur no deferred obligations in return. The last point is important, because moral indebtedness was a burden for the monarch, just as it was for an individual. When Elizabeth was guest rather than host she was acutely aware of the danger. At New Year 1585 she was entertained at Hanworth, Middlesex, by Henry Seymour, who gave her gifts, for which she returned £50 because she 'would not be in his debt'. At the same time Henry's sister Mary gave 'but would receive nothing back, deferring all till she had need'.⁵⁵ Most of the time, however, the Crown retained control of the time of gifts, holding the Christmas season within Court, safe in the knowledge that the seasonal cycle ensured that the gift-bond with its great subjects would be renewed and fructified each year.

Ministers, nobles, and courtiers mimicked the royal ceremony in their turn. Wolsey was said by the Venetian ambassador to receive presents 'like the king' making 15,000 ducats a year.⁵⁶ The Earl of Leicester received gifts valued at £847 in 1564, many of them from courtiers and their wives, some from fellow nobles, bishops, or merchants such as Sir Thomas Gresham.⁵⁷ The list of Leicester's counter-gifts also survives, and gives some indication of the assumptions underlying these exchanges. In making his return he seems to have felt no need to offer a gift in every case. Instead he singled out key political families and individuals—the Cecils, the Howards, Lord Lumley, and the Earl of Arundel, the queen's relatives by marriage Lady Hunsdon and Lady Knollys—and targeted his presents to them.⁵⁸ Generous presents of this kind must have aimed at consolidating political relationships within a generalized system of exchange. The accounts and correspondence of the Manners, Stanley, and Sidney families show New Year's gifts being employed in similar ways. In 1587, the Manners's agent advised his master that his father had customarily given something of the value of £40 to Leicester, who thanked him the next year for a pair of flagons. In the same decade Burghley

⁵² *CSP Sp*, 1568–79, 290.

⁵³ The usual costs were around £20. Alnwick Castle, MS. U.1.2 (2), U.I.1. Batho, *Household Papers of Henry Percy*, 48, 67.

⁵⁴ *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath, 14 vols. (London: Longman, 1861–1879), ix, 163–4.

⁵⁵ *HMC, Bath*, iv, 157–8.

⁵⁶ *LP*, III: i, 402.

⁵⁷ BL, Add. MS. 78172.

⁵⁸ BL, Add. MS. 78172. The Leicester list is particularly interesting because it calculates the value of presents given and received, excluding clothing and horses – the total received was £847 1s 3d, that given was £664 8s 4d, plus an extra £96 13s for plate.

was routinely given a standing cup by the Manners, and 'great gifts' unspecified by the Talbots. The fourth Earl of Derby received presents from Leicester and his cousin Charles Howard, the Lord Admiral. Sir Henry Sidney gave Burghley a standing cup and Leicester an expensive St George collar in 1579.⁵⁹ Leicester's inventory for 1582 shows that Burghley continued to give him New Year's gifts, which we may be sure were reciprocated.⁶⁰ Honour demanded that the great men of the realm exchanged such courtesies and the reassurance of general goodwill that it provided.

We have seen that individual gift-givers took advantage of the license of the New Year to display loyal clientage, or proffer in hope of return. This must surely explain why Leicester, for example, felt no need to provide a counter-gift when the Master of the Rolls gave him a cup or Sir Thomas Gresham a great horse. The Merchant Adventurers proffered Cecil a great standing bowl in 1602, and the Bishop of Winchester a standing cup: it seems highly unlikely that there would have been an obligation to return an immediate gift for gift.⁶¹ The behaviour hinted at in these lists phases from gestures of political and familial goodwill at one extreme to the danger of bribery at the other. Robert Cecil became particularly conscious of the corruption of the gift at New Year, and made an explicit point of refusing many of the benefits offered to him. Yet his late Elizabethan list of gifts received contains two great pieces of plate, in each case 'from a ward', reflecting his role as Master of the Court of Wards, with all the profit that that provided.⁶² This one-way traffic in gifts shows the politics of the courtly New Year at their least attractive: not an expression of loyalty or affinity but an excuse to use the offering as a means of attracting the attention of one of the great men of the realm. Here the forms of specific exchange which mimicked beneficence were fully visible.

This is exemplified in the series of letters with which Sir Julius Caesar began the New Year between 1589 and 1591. His objective was a move from the Court of Admiralty to the Mastership of the Rolls, though he was willing to settle for the Mastership of the Court of Requests as a preliminary goal.⁶³ His targets were the Lord Admiral, Charles Howard and his lady, Sir Francis Walsingham, Lord Chancellor Hatton, Lord Burghley, and the Earl of Essex. Each was sent at least one New Year's gift, accompanied by a 'posie' setting out his ambitions. He could be blunt, complaining to Howard in 1591 that nothing had happened after his earlier promise of treasure.⁶⁴ To Essex he lamented in 1590 that 'my cup 2 yeres since, and my picktoothes the last yere either forgot their uses or wrought no remembrance'.

⁵⁹ HMC, *Rutland*, i, 232, 279; iv, 387, 413; HMC, *Bath*, v, 96, 117; BL, Add. MS. 63742, fo. 116v; HMC, *De l'Isle and Dudley*, i, 243, 259, 267.

⁶⁰ BL, Add. MS. 78177.

⁶¹ HMC, *Salisbury*, xii, 527–8.

⁶² See Chapter 7, Section II, The Language of Judicial Corruption.

⁶³ Caesar's office seeking had already spread over seven years. The record of New Year's letters is in Caesar's draft book, some with considerable revision, so it is impossible to be sure if he sent them in precisely the form noted: BL, Lans. MS. 157. Lamar M. Hill, *Bench and Bureaucracy: the Public Career of Sir Julius Caesar 1580–1636*, (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1988). Alan Haynes, 'Dr Julius Caesar: a Stately Measure of Advancement', *History Today*, 21:11 (1971), 788–92.

⁶⁴ BL, Lans. MS. 157, fo. 8r.

In 1591 he tried flattery where complaint had failed. Then Essex was the 'forcible loadston to draw the affections and hartes of honest men', who might perhaps by chance show his 'posie' to the queen.⁶⁵ Even Burghley was subjected to a mixture of harassment and unctuous persuasion. Here Caesar trod carefully because a gift of plate had been refused, so the next year he offered just a handkerchief and a text emphasizing how much he could offer once he had been aided.⁶⁶ By the end of January 1591 Caesar had achieved a bit of his ambition, being made one of the extraordinary Masters of Requests. Surely he owed this in part to his determined exploitation of the language of giving?

PROGRESSES AND GIFTS

While the New Year's ceremony was quintessentially of the Court and ritualized, the prince in progress offered wider possibilities for the patronage exchanges expressed through gifts. Monarchs needed to travel their realm, both for the practical purpose of exploiting a variety of residences for the Court, and for political security. The nature of hospitality offered by their subjects and overt gestures of loyalty by cities, towns, and individual hosts became tests of the quality of bond between the ruler and the ruled. The assumptions underlying these exchanges had altered little in the later medieval period, and would continue in place at least until the Civil War. When the monarch came to the territory of a subject there were ceremonies of greeting: first the hosts would meet the royal party at the boundary of a jurisdiction or estate, then the symbols of urban power or household authority would be surrendered, the monarch would graciously return them, and a speech act of welcome would probably be offered.⁶⁷ Thus far there were common expectations, with the provision of feasts and entertainment—no doubt with hunting for the individual host—while processions and pageants were the common pattern for cities and towns. The image was one of total prestation in deference to the sovereign, though the offering always had a coercive edge. William Harrison, in his *Description of England*, observed that 'every nobleman's house is her [the queen's] palace, where she continueth during pleasure and till return again to some of her own'.⁶⁸ In James I's reign the Earl of Northampton was more blunt, insisting that 'the kinge by his prerogative may take up any howse in his progress'.⁶⁹

Cities and towns had long experience of ceremonial in greeting and entertaining monarchs. The first recorded royal reception by York occurred in 1396, and by Richard III's time detailed evidence shows the councillors calculating carefully

⁶⁵ BL, Lans. MS. 157, fos. 10^r, 8^r.

⁶⁶ BL, Lans. MS. 157, fos. 10^r, 63^r.

⁶⁷ Gordon Kipling, *Enter the King: Theatre, Liturgy and Ritual in the Late Medieval Civic Triumph* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Sydney Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

⁶⁸ Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, (London: 1587 edn.), online edn., 6 vols., <<http://www.english.ox.ac.uk/holinshed>>, i, 196.

⁶⁹ John Hawarde, *Les Reportes del Cases in Camera Stellata 1593 to 1607*, ed. William Paley Baildon (London: Spottiswoode & Co., 1894), 311.

how to maintain their political position through the formality and warmth of their welcomes.⁷⁰ London, of course, was pre-eminent in its royal ceremonial, but most provincial centres were aware of what was expected of them when a prince announced his proposal to visit.⁷¹ The political importance of the formal royal entry, as against the simple presence of the monarch on the estate of a subject, waxed and waned through our period. Henry VII urgently needed his progress to the north in 1486 'in order', says Polydore Vergil, 'to keep in obedience the folk of the north, savage and more eager than others for upheavals'.⁷² In the later years of his reign, and particularly in that of Henry VIII, less significance seems to have been attached to formal progress. There were ceremonial entries, especially that for Katherine of Aragon in London, and a series of welcomes from Canterbury, Bristol, and Coventry.⁷³ The 1535 progress around Berkshire, Wiltshire, and Gloucestershire and the 1541 journey to York, had political and religious purposes, and were full displays of royal power.⁷⁴ But Henry VIII's normal notion of a progress was pastime in good company, often accompanied only by the small riding household, and the key obligation of the individual host was to provide an abundance of game.⁷⁵

By the reign of Elizabeth the royal progresses attracted a much greater level of publicity than earlier in the century.⁷⁶ While the holiday aspect of her journeys was not forgotten Elizabeth regularly chose to emphasize the public and performative aspects of her visits. Take the example of the Worcester entry of 1575 planned for systematically by the city council in a surviving ordinance.⁷⁷ There was to be an oration of welcome, two pageants, proper hospitality, and a general tidying of the

⁷⁰ Neil Murphy, 'Receiving Royals in Later Medieval York: Civic Ceremony and the Municipal Elite, 1478–1503', *Northern History*, 43: 2, (2006), 241–55; Pamela Tudor-Craig, 'Richard III's Triumphant Entry into York', in Rosemary Horrox (ed.), *Richard III and the North*, (Hull: University of Hull Centre for Local History, 1986), 108–16; Lorraine Attreed, 'The Politics of Welcome: Ceremonies and Constitutional Development in Late Medieval English Towns', in Barbara Hanawalt and K. L. Reyerson (eds.), *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 216–19.

⁷¹ Anne Lancashire, *London Civic Theatre: City Drama and Pageantry from Roman Times to 1558* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁷² *The Anglica Historia of Polydore Vergil. A.D. 1485–1537*, ed. Denys Hay (London: Camden Society, 3rd ser. 34, 1950), 11.

⁷³ HMC, 9th Report, Appendix 1, 145–9; Mark C. Pilkinton (ed.), REED: *Bristol* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1997), 10–14; R. W. Ingram (ed.), REED: *Coventry* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1981), 107.

⁷⁴ On the 1535 journey see Robert Bell, 'The Royal Visit to Acton Court in 1535', in Starkey, *Henry VIII: A European Court*, 118–25. On the significance of the 1541 progress see especially Tim Thornton, 'Henry VIII's Progress through Yorkshire in 1541 and its Implications for Northern Identities', *Northern History* 46: 2 (2009), 231–44. BL, Add. MS. 6113, fo. 179.

⁷⁵ Neil Samman, 'The Progresses of Henry VIII, 1509–1529', in Diarmaid MacCulloch (ed.), *The Reign of Henry VIII: Politics, Policy and Piety* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), 59–73, shows that most of his earlier peregrinations were summer hunting trips.

⁷⁶ The most thorough consideration is in Jayne Elisabeth Archer, Elizabeth Goldring, and Sarah Knight (eds.), *The Progresses, Pageants and Entertainments of Queen Elizabeth I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁷⁷ John Nichols's, *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth I*, ed. Elizabeth Goldring, Faith Eales, et al., 5 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), ii, 337–41.

community. The deputy recorder's welcome was so approved that 'dyvers honorable afterward willed to have copies thereof'. The queen's words in response to this urban obeisance are unusually fully recorded. In her remarks to the Bishop of Worcester she remarked that she liked the Worcester citizenry 'as well of them as I have liked of any people in all my progresse time' and at her departure she told the accompanying train of townsmen that 'you all pray so hartily for me, as I fear you will by your prayers make me lyve too long' and rode away 'with teres in her eyes'.⁷⁸ In the first twenty years of her reign the queen again and again performed these affective gestures of gratitude for hospitality given and loyalty displayed, whether sitting through the lengthy disputations and plays presented by the universities or admiring the awkward dramas offered by local schoolmasters and their pupils. They assured her contact with élites beyond the Court and cultivated an image of access unrivalled in the long early modern period.

The scripts to be used for visits to private hosts were less well rehearsed. The variable interests of individual monarchs meant that their courtiers needed flexibility to judge the royal will correctly, and Elizabeth's preferences remained for some time an uncertain novelty. Nicholas Bacon, writing to Lord Burghley in 1572, reflected a general anxiety when he asked for advice on how to behave when the queen visited, since 'no man is more rawe in suche a matter then myselfe'.⁷⁹ There were, however, plenty of courtly brokers who claimed understanding of the queen's will and made it their business to ensure it was achieved. The basic structure sought was a formal reception by the host, the surrender of the house, and a display of hospitality with the organizational and financial assistance of the Lord Chamberlain's office. When Thomas Churchyard described the reception by individual hosts on the 1578 progress to East Anglia, he used phrases such as the queen was 'nobly entertained' or 'worthily feasted', or they offered 'a franke house'. Not everyone managed even this display of generosity: Churchyard also noted that at Hide Hall in Essex, home of Sir Thomas Jocelyn, 'I heard of no greate cheere nor banketting'.⁸⁰

Increasingly, hosts felt that they had to do more than merely make available their houses and provide a portion of the feasting. They sought at least to appropriate some of the ideas used by the towns in welcoming pageants, or more ambitiously to offer a courtly mode of masque entertainment. The Earl of Leicester provided the model and his great Kenilworth entertainment of the queen in 1575 set the standard to emulate. By the second great progress period in the last fifteen years of the reign such pageants were commonplace. Their specific messages were various, but all worked within the ideal paradigm of the greatness of the honour accorded the host by the queen's presence. Elizabeth revived the 'enchanted' knight at the gates of Sir Henry Lee's Ditchley estate, and he in turn claimed that he 'lyved' by her presence. The welcomers at the Harefield entertainment of 1602 referred to

⁷⁸ John Nichols's, *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth I*, ii, 348–9.

⁷⁹ Henry Ellis (ed.), *Original Letters Illustrative of English History*, 1st ser., 3 vols. (London: Harding, Triphook & Leppard, 1824), ii, 264.

⁸⁰ Nichols's, *Progresses of Elizabeth*, ii, 719–20, 751–2.

Elizabeth as 'the Mistress of this faire company, though she know the way to all mens harts, yet she knowes the way to few mens howses, except she love them very well'.⁸¹

It is within this concern to control the benefits of progress that we should locate the material gift that was an anticipated part of hosting royalty. Cities and towns had routinely given food stuffs to visiting kings and nobles as part of the performance of welcome. When Margaret of Anjou chose to visit Coventry 'to se the play' in 1457, the mayor and his brethren sent her a lengthy list of bread, fish, fowl, and fruits to accommodate her needs.⁸² Canterbury was constantly giving food to its visitors under Henry VII and Henry VIII. York was still doing this in 1541, when Henry VIII's grand entry was received with the municipal gift of twenty fat oxen and a hundred sheep.⁸³ In the later part of the century it seems that direct hospitality had largely these gestures to royalty, though specialized produce such as manchpane and luxury fruits continued to be given to courtly followers as well as on occasions to other visiting dignitaries and assize judges. Gifts of food had practical advantage to the royal purveyors and were consumed as part of the commonsality offered to the Court. In monarchical reciprocation some of the produce of the hunt might be given to hosts and others attending the travelling Court. In 1521, William Fitzwilliam, the Treasurer of Henry VIII's household, reported that those who visited the king on progress were given gracious words and venison 'to their singular comfort'.⁸⁴

Other offerings could either be purely symbolic, or tokenistic. The rich pageantry of urban entries had long involved gifting of this symbolic kind: the gifts of the gods were called down upon the head of the monarch; doves were released to represent his purity; the Graces danced to make offering of plenty. Characteristic were the York pageants that welcomed Henry VII in 1486. These involved a player dressed as King Ebranke, York's legendary founder, surrendering the symbolic keys of the city, and offering a crown to the new monarch:

To you henrie I submit my Citie key and crowne
To reuyll and redresse your dew to defence
Never to this Citie to presume ne pretense
But holy I graunt to your governance
As A principall parcel of your inheritaunce.

Further scenes gave Henry the sword and sceptre of kingship, relating them all finally to divine grace conferred by the intercession of the city's protectress, the

⁸¹ Robert Langham, *A Letter: Whearin, Part of the Entertainment unto the Queenz Maiesty, at Killingworth Castl...is Signified*, ed. R. J. P. Kuin (Leiden: Brill, 1983); Nichols's, *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*, iii, 688–90; iv, 180. On the Harefield entertainment see Jean Wilson, 'The Harefield Entertainment and the Cult of Elizabeth I', *Antiquaries Journal* 66 (1986), 315–29, and Gabriel Heaton, 'Elizabethan Entertainments in Manuscript: the Harefield Festivities (1602) and the Dynamics of Exchange', in Archer et al, *Progresses*, 227–44.

⁸² Ingram, *REED: Coventry*, 37.

⁸³ *York Civic Records*, ed. Angelo Raine, 8 vols. (Wakefield: Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1939–53), i, 150–9.

⁸⁴ *LP*, IV: ii, 2368.

Virgin.⁸⁵ While many civic entries might embed political messages or requests in their welcomes, the formal rhetoric was overwhelmingly that of giving and gratitude. The material gift handed to the monarch might also have strong symbolic meaning: gloves, the usual offering of the universities, signified clean hands and clean hearts; Bibles, apparently a rare offering even after the Reformation, conveyed a clear message of Protestant devotion. The most dramatic moment in Elizabeth's entry into London in 1559 came when she received a proffered English Bible, promised to read it most diligently, and having kissed it, put it 'upon her breast'.⁸⁶ The restaging of this encounter by the Scots at the entry of their queen to Edinburgh reveals the significance of the ritual: it was reported, admittedly by a distinctly prejudiced John, that Mary could not refuse the Bible, but that she frowned at its praise and immediately 'sche gave it to the most pestilent Papist within the Realme, to wit, to Anthonie Erskyn'.⁸⁷

There was also a well-established tradition of urban centres giving monarchs and their families more durable gifts in the form of purses or silver-gilt cups, usually containing coin: 'potable cash' as Groebner calls the equivalent offering in Basel. As early as 1396 York gave two silver plates worth £200 to Richard II: by 1483 the city council produced 500 marks in a cup for Richard III and 100 gold shillings for his wife Anne. Princess Margaret was given 100 gold angels on her 1503 visit, and in 1541 the vulnerable city, atoning for its role in the 1536 rebellion, proffered Henry VIII £145 in gold in silver-gilt cups.⁸⁸ These large gifts can, of course, be seen as symbols of the fealty/deference of the corporation, but were of some material importance to both givers and receiver. Their very durability and value on occasions constrained the behaviour of the recipients. Although Richard III took York's offerings, he allegedly refused money from Canterbury; Bishop Langton told the burghers that 'in many grete cities and tounis wer grete summis of mony gif to hym which he hath refusyd', so the king was given a generous allowance of food instead.⁸⁹ There was a political price that a weak monarch might not wish to pay, a price also hinted at by Margaret's response to York's gift in 1503 that she would ever 'love you and this Cities the days of my liff and I schall schewes to the Kynges grace my fader the gret kyndenesse that ye have doon me at this tyme'.⁹⁰ In 1486, York was able to plead poverty and not provide a monetary gift, but it is instructive that no evidence survives of other cities giving to Henry VII in their elaborate pageants of that year. The ambiguity of the urban gift may explain why it was sometimes given in rather private conditions, for example when a delegation

⁸⁵ Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson (eds.), *REED York*, 2 vols. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979), i, 137–52.

⁸⁶ Nichols's, *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*, i, 139.

⁸⁷ John Knox, *Works*, ed. David Laing, 6 vols. (Edinburgh: Wodrow Society, 1846–64), ii, 288.

⁸⁸ For similar giving on the Continent see Jesse D. Hurlbut, 'The Duke's First Entry: Burgundian Inauguration and Gift', in Kathleen Ashley and Wim Husken (eds.), *Moving Subjects: Processional Performance in the Middle Ages* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 155–85; Valentin Groebner, *Liquid Assets, Dangerous Gifts*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 27–8; Murphy, 'Receiving Royals', 250; *York Civic Records*, 9, iv, 68–70.

⁸⁹ HMC, *9th Report*, Appendix 1, 145.

⁹⁰ Quoted by Murphy, 'Receiving Royals', 251.

of councillors visited the monarch or member of the royal family in their lodgings, not flaunted as part of the formality of greeting. Cups and their content were usually paid for by individual merchants: they presumably hoped to reap the benefit of generous giving, also perhaps to conceal the full largesse from their fellow citizens. For the royal guest intimacy might prove binding, but at least urban opinion would not have been alerted to the potable wealth available. It must be said, however, that the forms of presentation were not consistent: when Katherine of Aragon was received by the city of London in 1503 she was showered with ostentatious gifts at the first greeting by the lord mayor and aldermen in Cheapside.⁹¹

Elizabeth was almost invariably offered money and plate by her loyal townsmen. From the very beginning of the reign, when London gave a gift of 1000 marks in gold at the 1559 entry, the queen anticipated and received cups of gold or silver gilt or purses containing sovereigns. When the city of Oxford, gave a cup and £30 [or £40] in gold, in 1566, it was noted that this was a change from earlier custom and was instituted by the Steward, and courtier, Sir Francis Knollys.⁹² While Elizabeth might occasionally disclaim any interest in the monetary gift, she clearly encouraged a pattern of behaviour in which such giving became essential to the honour of the town. She also eschewed any privacy in the ceremony of giving. Where detail survives a consistent pattern emerges of gold and silver gilt being given by the mayor as part of the entry ceremonies themselves, scripted for maximum impact. For example, in Norwich in 1578 the mayor in his oration surrendered the sword of the city and offered 'this treasure [as] a pledge of our good wills and habilitie: which all how great or little soever they be, we poure down at your pleasure. . .'. In response, Elizabeth, thanking the corporation for their tokens of goodwill, asserted that 'Princes have no neede of money', but that she took the loyalty of her subjects as the greatest riches of the kingdom.⁹³ Once the present had been acknowledged it became customary for a footman to bear it through the streets as part of the royal procession. But even here the revealed gift also concealed: the cup or purse *contained* the pieces of gold, which were hidden within. They required the monarch to look and to calculate, while Court and townsmen were simply made aware that there *were* riches within.

Private hosts also recognized that the queen expected gifts that were more durable than consumables to make merry, or even offerings to assist the hunt. By 1573, on the Kentish progress, hosts were regularly imitating towns in giving plate—a standing cup of crystal and silver-gilt from Sir Richard Baker at Sissinghurst, three bowls of silver and gilt embossed with the queen's arms from Mr Tufton, who was her host for two days in August.⁹⁴ Thereafter hosts were gradually emboldened to offer more intimate presents in the form of jewels and elaborate clothing. In 1574, Mary Ratcliffe, the keeper of the queen's jewels, recorded a series of gifts on the

⁹¹ Lancashire, *London Civic Theatre*, 132.

⁹² Nichols's, *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*, i, 472.

⁹³ Nichols's, *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*, ii, 790.

⁹⁴ BL, Stowe MS. 555, fo.138r, printed in Arthur Jefferies Collins, *Jewels and Plate of Queen Elizabeth I* (London: British Museum, 1955), 544–5.

progress to Bristol—a salamander and phoenix jewel from Sir John Young at Bristol, a dolphin in mother-of-pearl garnished with gold from Sir John Sherington.⁹⁵ The Earl of Leicester, who certainly gave Elizabeth gifts of jewels from an early date, is credited with initiating the change, but the development of such intimate largesse must essentially be explained by the queen's own preferences.

The growing value and permanence of these gifts offered to the queen was matched by the elaboration of their forms of presentation. When Lord Keeper Puckering was to receive the queen in 1594 it appeared he was more concerned about this aspect of the visit than any other. His second note in a list of plans read: 'What present shalbe given by my Lord, when and by whome it shalbe presented, and whether more then one'. This note was followed by three further items addressing the question of what gifts to give.⁹⁶ Giving was often incorporated into pageants, especially those of welcome: gifts that might once have been symbolic now acquired a significant monetary value as well. Jewels were presented by sea Titans at Elvetham in 1591, by Ceres in a crown of wheat at Bisham in 1592, and by a dairymaid giving a jewelled fork and rake at Sir Thomas Egerton's at Harefield in 1602.⁹⁷ Sir Edward Coke, seeking Robert Cecil's advice on a progress gift for the queen, concluded that he would give 'that which shall be acceptable, whatsoever it cost'.⁹⁸

Looking back after the queen's death, Burghley's biographer John Clapham described how 'in times of Progress there was no person who entertained her but... he bestowed a jewel on her; a custom in former times begun by her special favourites that (having in great measure tasted of her bounty) did give her only of her own'.⁹⁹ This closely corresponds to Weiner's idea that grand gestures of prestation are aimed at 'keeping-while-giving', ensuring that the honour of participants in exchange is upheld by great generosity that insured the retention of what was thought inalienable.¹⁰⁰ Meanwhile hosts had to insist in their rhetoric that whatever they gave was, to quote Lord Norris at the queen's reception at Rycote in 1592, 'a trifle' offered with 'my heart: the greatest gift I can offer and the chiefest that I ought'.¹⁰¹ The essence of giving was that it upheld the asymmetrical pattern of power between monarch and subject. Clapham recognized that Elizabeth 'loved to be sued unto', as an expression of that pattern of authority, and symbolic or small gestures could still play a part in this. She showed princely gratitude to Sir Francis Carew for his oranges and the cherries he delayed ripening until her visit.¹⁰² But she also took active pleasure, again to quote Clapham, in being 'gratified with

⁹⁵ BL, Harl. MS. 4698, fos. 22^r–4^r.

⁹⁶ BL, Harl. MS. 6850, fo. 91^r.

⁹⁷ Nichols's, *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*, iii, 587, 608; iv, 181.

⁹⁸ HMC, *Salisbury*, xi, 332.

⁹⁹ *Elizabeth's England: Certain Observations Concerning the Life and Reign of Queen Elizabeth* by John Clapham, eds. Elizabeth P. Read and Conyers Read (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1951), 87–8.

¹⁰⁰ Annette B. Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992).

¹⁰¹ Nichols's, *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*, iii, 618.

¹⁰² *Diary of Baron Waldstein: An Elizabethan Traveller in England*, ed. G. W. Groos (London: Thames & Hudson, 1981), 164–5.

rewards', and the giving of great presents became crucial for the aspirant.¹⁰³ Sir William Cornwallis, who could ill afford it, felt constrained to spend £200 on jewels as part of his Highgate entertainment in 1594, to the contempt of his father who believed his 'presumptuous prodigality' made wise men laugh.¹⁰⁴

The advantage of progress for petitioners was that it offered different opportunities for visibility and accessibility from normal courtly life, even if an individual did not actually provide hospitality. Sir Edward Dyer, out of favour for several years in the early 1570s, was able to perform his mournful 'Song of the Oke' for the queen at Woodstock in 1575.¹⁰⁵ Sir Arthur Gorges presented a jewel simply as the queen passed by his new house at Chelsea.¹⁰⁶ Cavalcades of loyal subjects met the monarch at each county boundary, and some of the worthy gentry identified by counsellors were rewarded with knighthoods for their sons. It was an essential feature of the progresses that there should not appear to be any specific reciprocity, either for hospitality, gifts, or petitions. The queen's words to her hosts, both urban and private, included assurances that she would be mindful of their giving—to the Earl of Hertford for example that 'shee would not forget the same'—but thankfulness was all.¹⁰⁷ Elizabeth certainly did not need Seneca to remind her that 'he who receives a benefit gladly has already returned it'.¹⁰⁸

Self-interest of the subject had to be cloaked in the language of deference, and specific suits uncoupled from the royal visit. Sir William Cornwallis, still struggling to use his giving, remarked to Sir Robert Cecil in 1601 that he could not 'move recompense' in his suit so soon after a progress 'like [a] waterman that calls presently for... hire after labour'.¹⁰⁹ In general it was recognized that travelling provided the monarch with an excuse not to attend to mundane requests. Lord Talbot remarked to his father, the Earl of Shrewsbury, in 1589 that while the queen was staying with Sir Francis Walsingham nothing 'may be moved to her but matter of delight and to content her, which is the only cause of her going thither'.¹¹⁰

However, there was an obviously demanding edge to all this display: the consumption of hospitality and offering of gifts creating a diffuse future obligation to reciprocate.¹¹¹ Welcoming and entertaining gave hosts an opportunity to sketch the form that that reciprocity might take. In 1591, and again in 1594, Burghley used Theobalds' welcomes to make a case for his own retirement and the elevation of his son Robert to the Secretaryship of State. The Earl of Hertford's Elvetham entertainment pointed the queen towards support of his cautious naval policy as Lord Admiral. And, most famously, the Earl of Leicester hoped to use his last

¹⁰³ *Elizabeth's England*, 86.

¹⁰⁴ Cambridge University Library, Hengrave MS. 88/2, no. 82.

¹⁰⁵ Ralph M. Sargent, *At the Court of Elizabeth: the Life and Lyrics of Sir Edward Dyer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935), 28–35.

¹⁰⁶ HMC, *De L'Isle and Dudley*, ii, 416.

¹⁰⁷ Nichols's, *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*, iii, 595. For more detailed discussion, see my article 'Giving and Receiving on Royal Progress', in Archer et al., *Progresses*, 46–54.

¹⁰⁸ Seneca, *De beneficiis*, II, xxx.2.

¹⁰⁹ HMC, *Salisbury*, xi, 397.

¹¹⁰ Edmund Lodge (ed.), *Illustrations of British History, Biography and Memoirs in the Reigns of Henry VIII... to James I*, 3 vols (London: John Chidley, 1838), ii, 367.

¹¹¹ The last phrase is Peter Blau's, in *Exchange and Power in Social Life* (New York: Wiley, 1964), 93.

Kenilworth pageant to persuade the queen to marry him, or at least to release him to marry elsewhere.¹¹² Not all suits, or offerings, brought the counter-gift, but pleasing Elizabeth might yield results. Dyer was able to return to Court after his mournful ditty, and then next year received more than gracious words: the monopolistic right to regulate tanners. The generosity of Burghley's progress entertainment in 1583 paved the way for the queen's acceptance of his errant son-in-law, the Earl of Oxford, allowing him to 'repayre to the court'.¹¹³ Towns petitioned for support in suits against individuals, or for help in economic stimulus, with some success if they channelled their requests through the counsellors accompanying the queen. Coventry was given support against John Hales; Stafford and Worcester both regained the right to be assize towns.¹¹⁴

Expectations were not always satisfied, and in the late years of Elizabeth's reign there is an undertow of resentment at inadequate reward. In 1602, John Chamberlain reported that Court gossip had assumed that Lord Howard of Effingham, the Lord Admiral, would give Elizabeth 'his rich hangings of all the fights with the Spanish Armada in eightie-eight', but offered only a rich garment instead.¹¹⁵ That great courtier Sir Henry Lee tried to stave off yet another royal visit to his Ditchley estate by claims of impoverishment and moans that, though he had been a loyal host no 'part of her Highness's many promises [had been] performed'.¹¹⁶ Sir William Cornwallis reflected bitterly on the failure of his loyal service in a letter to Robert Cecil about a Star Chamber dispute. His 'base' opponent would gain more reputation with his victory than Sir William from twenty-four years of loyal service 'or by giving and spending upon herself [the queen] in her time £2000 or £3000'.¹¹⁷ Sir Francis Carew reversed the complaint, telling Robert Cecil that he was unwilling to seek help with a suit for an episcopal lease, because, if granted, Elizabeth would expect 'greater entertainment and gifts at my hands'.¹¹⁸ In these years the delicate balance that Elizabeth had endeavoured to establish between profiting from her subjects and offering deferred generosity, or symbolic gestures like knighthood, was threatened by the decline of patronage under the fiscal pressures of war. And Elizabeth also showed herself less skilful in her handling of the pleas of her hosts and would-be servants.

If we compare the New Year's exchanges and the presentations on progress the similarities outweigh the differences. Both embedded the gift in the language of social bond, valorizing mutuality of affect and loyalty, rewarding fealty with

¹¹² James M. Sutton, 'The Retiring Patron: William Cecil and the Cultivation of Retirement, 1590-98', in Pauline Croft (ed.), *Patronage, Culture and Power: the Early Cecils* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 159-80; H. H. Boyle, 'Elizabeth's Entertainment at Elvetham: War Policy in Pageantry', *Studies in Philology* 68 (1971), 146-66; Simon Adams 'Robert Dudley', *ODNB*.

¹¹³ Sargeant, *At the Court of Elizabeth*, 34-5. *HMC, Rutland*, i, 150-1.

¹¹⁴ Benjamin Poole, *Coventry: Its History and Antiquities* (London: J. R. Smith, 1870), 246-8. *APC 1575-7*, 36; Mary Hill Cole, *The Portable Queen: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Ceremony* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 111-12.

¹¹⁵ *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 1939), i, 178.

¹¹⁶ Cambridge University Library, Hengrave 88/2, no. 82; *HMC, Salisbury*, x, 180.

¹¹⁷ *HMC, Salisbury*, v, 30.

¹¹⁸ *HMC, Salisbury*, vi, 139.

beneficence. In both, subjects endeavoured to show that the material offering was as nothing compared to the goodwill of the givers. In both, the Crown sought to appropriate these sentiments, while closing the exchange obligation that had been initiated. Specific exchanges reveal more or less of the success of subjects in creating disequilibrium, moving the ruler from beneficent sovereign to generous patron.¹¹⁹ The progress, with its movement of the monarch from host to guest, and its large potential audience, offered greater opportunities than the courtly ceremony, but both were important sites for the maintenance of ongoing bonds that could serve the political interests of the Tudor Crown and the economic interests of its subjects.

COUNSELLING AND ASKING

The gifts of the courtiers and other influential subjects were designed to beg, flatter, thank, and act as *aides memoire*. They could also be the vehicle for conveying advice across the gulf that separated sovereign from subject. Literary scholars remind historians that compliment and criticism could be joined together in early modern culture. What could not be said directly to the prince, or the man of power, could be articulated obliquely through the rhetorical strategies of panegyric and ostensible praise.¹²⁰ Once again the exchanges associated with the New Year proved a valuable way of approaching difficult messages that individuals felt had to be presented to the Crown. This might be personal: a form of protection for someone who had had difficulty in retaining royal favour. This seems to be the motive for Lord Morley's elaborate gift of lives from Boccaccio in 1543, after his daughter Lady Rochford had been attainted for her part in Katherine Howard's adultery.¹²¹ Arthur Throckmorton hoped to redeem himself when in disgrace in 1595 by staging a masque for Elizabeth, and accompanying it with the gift of a valuable ring. He assured Robert Cecil that he would not disturb the main masques 'for I am sorrowful and solemn, and my stay shall not be long'.¹²²

More interesting is the use of the season of goodwill to offer counsel to the monarch on matters of State and religion, following the model of general New Year's advice. John Foxe has a story that Bishop Latimer attended the royal New Year's ceremony sometime in the 1530s, with a Bible as his gift, and a napkin carrying the text 'the Lord will judge fornicators and adulterers'.¹²³ This seems

¹¹⁹ Gabriel Heaton, 'Performing Gifts: the MS Circulation of Elizabethan and Early Stuart Courtly Entertainments', unpublished Cambridge Ph.D. (2003), 45.

¹²⁰ The fullest study of this phenomenon is Kevin M. Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment: the Politics of Literature in the England of Charles I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). At the Tudor Court, the influence of Castiglione's approach in *Il Cortegiano* was important, and the problem of directness or oblique commentary was particularly discussed by Sir Thomas Elyot in *Pasquil the Playne* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1533).

¹²¹ Carley, 'Writings of Lord Morley', *Triumphs of English*, 42–3.

¹²² HMC, *Salisbury*, v, 99. Throckmorton hoped to insert his offering into the Court's New Year celebrations.

¹²³ John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments of Matters Most Speciall and Memorable, Happenyng in the Church* (London: John Day, 1570 edn.), 1961. If Latimer really carried this 'posie', he would surely have defended himself on the grounds that it was a scriptural text: Hebrews 13:4.

unlikely behaviour even for Latimer: however, the fact that Foxe's readers might find it credible gives a sense of what license might be permissible at the feast. Lord Morley used his last manuscript New Year's gift to Queen Mary in 1556 for the safer task of rehearsing the history of heresy in England and urging the need for continuing vigilance in protection of the faith.¹²⁴ Martin Bucer dedicated his *De Regno Christi* to Edward VI, designing it to stiffen the king's commitment to Protestant theology. He did so utilizing the convention of giving at the New Year—oddly failing to produce it at the season, so making it a 'gift out of time'.¹²⁵ The Duke of Somerset was the recipient of more direct advice in the form of complimentary verse from William Gray. Gray sent at least two 'gifts' to the Protector, urging him to 'forthar godis worde', beware of the papists, remember poor suitors, take good counsel, and beware of flatterers.¹²⁶ The advice that William, Lord Paget, offered to the duke at the New Year 1549 was better informed and more urgent. 'Delyberate maturely in all things', it begins, pointing to the need for decisive action and the avoidance of corruption: 'Take fee or rewarde of the kinge onelie. Kepe your ministres about youe uncorrupte'.¹²⁷ Thus Paget used his gift as the first major salvo in his attempt to save Somerset's faltering regime. Even a sovereign could use the season as a justification for speaking unpalatable truth: in December 1598 Elizabeth informed James VI that the best New Year's gift she could offer was counsel on the need to understand men's motives correctly. She then, in characteristic fashion, ensured that she would irritate her 'dear brother' by employing the trope '[consider] the mind of the giver, not the meanesse of the gifte'.¹²⁸

But though subjects might adopt gift strategies for truth-speaking to the monarch, and claim benefit of season and circumstance, there were obvious limits to acceptable discourse. Sir John Harington claimed that he showed some of his overtly political epigrams to his 'Soveraigne Lady', who is also rumoured to have laughed at his *New Discourse of a Stale Subject, Called the Metamorphosis of Ajax* (1596), ostensibly a plea for the newly invented water closet. The apparent boldness of the latter text in nominating a jury of great housekeepers, many of whom were known or suspected Catholics, and in singling out for praise the figure of Trajan as a synecdoche for the Earl of Essex, was wrapped in the manipulative foolery and adapted gift-texts that made Harington barely acceptable, if never

¹²⁴ 'Morley's Account of the Miracles of the Sacrament': text printed from BL, Add. MS. 12060 in *Triumphs of English*, Appendix 7, 253–69.

¹²⁵ Martin Bucer *De Regno Christi*, BL, Royal MS. 8. B. VII, preface. There is a similar attempt to influence Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk in 1560, when Anne Locke addressed her translation of Calvin's sermons to her, in the hope of encouraging her to further exertions for the Protestant community: Jane Donawerth, 'Women's Poetry and the Tudor-Stuart System of Gift Exchange', in Mary Elizabeth Burke, Jane Donawerth, and K. L. Nelson (eds.), *Women, Writing and the Reproduction of Culture in Tudor and Stuart England* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 10–13.

¹²⁶ Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, DR 10/2105, fos. 1–3. Gray is probably to be identified as the MP for Reading from 1547 who was a committed reformer and a client of Somerset's: S. T. Bindoff (ed.), *History of the Commons 1509–1558*, 4 vols. (London: 1982), ii, 256–8.

¹²⁷ 'Letters of William, Lord Paget', 19–20.

¹²⁸ *The Letters of Queen Elizabeth and King James VI of Scotland*, ed. John Bruce (London: Camden Society, os 46, 1849), 127.

promoted.¹²⁹ And Harington could step too far: Elizabeth convinced herself that he had displayed hostility to Leicester, prompting from him an epigram entitled 'To the Queene when she was pacified, and sent Misacmos thanks for the Invention.'¹³⁰ This was but one risky case of Harington's determination to use the gift register to set himself apart from the crowd of suitors surrounding the throne. He had, for example, long cultivated the Scottish monarch, sending him a copy of his translation of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* in 1591 which included an adaptation of the original clearly identifying this 'heire apparent to the crowne'.¹³¹ This was certainly followed by other gifts, culminating in the two dramatic offerings at New Year 1602–3 a version of the *Epigrams* and 'the Candlestick or a lantern, which you please'. The latter was represented as 'a jewell rich in hollow cane', a lantern of base metal (though surmounted with a gold crown), which begged on one side in emblematic, though blasphemous, form 'Domine, memento mei cum venero in regnum' and on the other 'post crucem lucem' (see Figure 4.4).¹³²

Most suitors for royal favour took fewer risks than Harington, seeking support from one of the key patronage brokers around the throne, and focusing gifts either on a minister, or even on one of his secretaries or gatekeepers.¹³³ The Lisles used direct gift strategies to please Henry VIII and his wives: they, or rather the invaluable John Husee, turned to Cromwell to get things done, backing petitions with tuns of wine, baked crane, and sturgeon. In March 1535, Husee had to wait until Cromwell went to Court to obtain a royal warrant for victualling, and seek an answer about a property issue from the king. To encourage the secretary to act he was given a 'puncheon' of wine and baked mullet, and assured Lisle (frankly unconvincingly) that he was 'his owein'.¹³⁴ Two years later Husee plotted to have

¹²⁹ Jason Scott-Warren, *Sir John Harington and the Book as Gift* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 56–103; Gerard Kilroy, 'Sir John Harington's Protesting Catholic Gifts', *Downside Review* 122: 426 (2004), 20–1. See also Debora Shuger, 'A Protesting Catholic Puritan in Elizabethan England', *JBS* 48: 3 (2009), 587–630, who warns against exaggerating Harington's covert Catholic sympathies.

¹³⁰ *The Letters and Epigrams of Sir John Harington*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure (New York: Octagon Books, 1977), 167.

¹³¹ Scott-Warren, *Sir John Harington*, 51–2. Harington also sent complimentary copies to the Earls of Essex, Cumberland, Ormonde, and Derby, with pertinent references for each: Steven May, *The Elizabethan Courtier Poets: The Poems and their Contexts* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1991), 161–2.

¹³² Scott-Warren, *Sir John Harington*, 193–8. The illustration of the lantern is drawn from the description Harington prepared for James's heir, Prince Henry, in 1605: FSL, MS. V.a.249. The reference to the jewel in the cane is to Virgil's *Aeneid*, in which Brutus, to avoid the tyranny of Tarquin, made his offering to the oracle of Delphi by disguising its true worth. The passage from the Vulgate-Luke 23:42 'Lord remember me when you come into your kingdom'—is seen by Scott-Warren as essentially a witty impresa to flatter and beg for support from the Scottish king, but Kilroy adds that its images of the birth and passion of Christ, and the story of the good thief, should be read as an articulation of Harington's hopes for toleration and generosity to Catholics once the time of tyranny is over: Kilroy, 'Protesting Catholic Gifts', 24–7.

¹³³ The definitive description of the search for patronage in Elizabethan England remains Wallace T. MacCaffery, 'Place and Patronage in Elizabethan Politics', in Joel Hurstfield and Charles H. Williams (eds.), *Elizabethan Government and Society: Essays Presented to Sir John Neale* (London: Athlone Press, 1961), 95–126.

¹³⁴ TNA, SP3/5, fo. 24^r.



Fig. 4.4 Sir John Harington. Drawing of His Lantern Gift to James VI.

© Folger Shakespeare Library.

two of Lisle's 'great horses' sent over as gifts in the pursuit of his claim to the priory of Frithelstock, on which Cromwell's nephew Richard had already been bending the minister's ear. Though the gift would be large 'if your great horses wold learne to speke by the way I dowght not but they shuld be hard better than many men suitors who have been long here'.¹³⁵ Husee's letters are the paradigmatic texts for the relationship between gifts, patronage, and the pursuit of political interest at the Tudor Court. There was a present or reward for every circumstance, and a clear calculation about giving or withholding material benefit dependent on the success of Lisle's suits.

No comparable papers survive for the second half of the century. The range of the Salisbury archive, however, allows us in the last years of Elizabeth's reign to see far more of the process of presenting offerings and seeking support. Here the queen's principal minister is besieged with offerings of horses, hawks, dogs,

¹³⁵ TNA, SP 1/115, fo. 201^r. Muriel St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle Letters*, 6 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), iv, 256. On the continuing saga of the horse/s see Husee to Lisle in August 1537: *Lisle Letters*, iv, 376, 381.

venison, pasties, and novelties such as a parakeet.¹³⁶ Wine, hawks, and venison were often given in thanks for services and favours rendered: equally they were proffered because present and future wants needed to be satisfied. In a typical year, 1595–6, patronage in the past, the present, and the future were all reflected in letters to Cecil. The governor of the Levant Company sent two Turkish carpets as thanks for the orchestration of royal letters to the sultan; Sir Edward Winter forwarded red deer pasties while asking to be exempted from the shrivalty; Arthur Capel and Sir William Russell, Lord Deputy of Ireland, had no immediate wants, but delivered presents to ensure that ‘so poor and mean’ friends would not be forgotten in the future.¹³⁷ Not only did Cecil benefit directly from this flow of gifts, he was also asked to evaluate and deliver presents that were designed for the queen. The Lord Admiral, Charles Howard, thanked him for delivering her ‘a toy’ that bettered the gift by ten times, while reminding him how laborious royal service was. Sir Henry Knyvett asked him to vet a book he wished to present.¹³⁸ Charles, Lord Mountjoy, summed this up elegantly when he wrote of Cecil’s ability to do good turns, which was so great that he received ‘many men’s protestations in requital of your favours’.¹³⁹ Those protestations, and the pressure to ‘do good turns’, challenged the managerial skills of all the great ministers of the Tudor monarchs, and perhaps Cecil, faced as he was by the demands of war and a dearth of patronage in the 1590s.

MONARCHICAL ATTITUDES

Each English monarch had his or her own understanding of how to display the liberality that ‘became’ a prince. Henry VIII’s obsessive concerns with his status as a European ruler placed magnificence at the heart of his policy, first and foremost in his dealings with other princes but also at his own Court. The early largesse and display of his regime has about it a casual and ostensibly carefree quality. When Edward Hall described the courtly revels of 1511 he was intrigued by the ease with which the common people were able to appear in the proceedings, and to take the gold decorations on the costumes of the maskers intended for the ladies, gentlemen, and ambassadors ‘in token of liberalitie’.¹⁴⁰ This sense of royal generosity, not usually of course to the common sort, set the tone for Court spectacle, much of it managed by Wolsey who ensured the appropriate flow of liberality, while of course

¹³⁶ If we just take the two years 1594–5, there are a very large number of such gifts, and they continue in the following years: HMC, *Salisbury*, iv, 354–6, 362–3, 368, 411, 438; v, 19, 219, 237, 307, 340, 355, 382, 414–15, 464, 479.

¹³⁷ HMC, *Salisbury*, vi, 215; V, 479; VI, 279, 298.

¹³⁸ HMC, *Salisbury*, vi, 85–6, 208. Even William Camden used the same device: fearful of displeasing the ‘humour of the court’, he asked Cecil to read and protect his discourses on English names and surnames: HMC, *Salisbury*, vi, 461.

¹³⁹ HMC, *Salisbury*, v, 307.

¹⁴⁰ Edward Hall, *The Union of the Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre and Yorke: The Triumphant Reign of Henry the VIII* (London: Richard Grafton, 1550), fo. xi’.

being the overwhelming beneficiary of royal patronage. The visible gift was most often that of hospitality to the king, as on the occasion described in loving detail by Cavendish when the king came as a masker, was entertained in great splendour, and served with a banquet of two hundred dishes.¹⁴¹ The political crises of the second half of the reign sobered this Renaissance exuberance, but in compensation Henry gained the resources to act as a lavish patron towards a large circle of those whose political support merited reward.

The household records and the Lisle letters speak to another aspect of Henry's attitude to gifts. He and his ministers constantly received the small presents, and gifts of the hunt, that have already been discussed. This was at once an open and highly competitive Court and the flow of food offerings was remarkable. On progress and in London Henry received and gave deer, pheasants, partridges, and the fat quails which appear with some regularity in the Lisle letters. These are gifts that mark out a form of intimacy, not simply the supply of the Household below stairs. To take just two examples of gifts given: for three years running from 1530 the Countess of Oxford gave Henry cheeses each November, and in the same period Sir Giles Capel was a repeat giver with cheeses, pheasants, and partridges, none at the Christmas season.¹⁴² Henry himself was an active participant in giving, largely offering deer of his own killing to Wolsey and Cromwell, but sending a modest present of apples to the latter in 1538.¹⁴³ Like other monarchs, Henry gave away clothing to men of the Household and Privy Chamber, and on occasions to great nobles.¹⁴⁴ The nature of the surviving records, particularly Henry's very detailed Privy Purse accounts for the end of the 1520s may unduly influence our understanding of the dominance of food gifts in this period. However, the density of the flow to and from the Crown, and the wide range of participants, suggests that the foods involved were both an important practical contribution to royal diet and a powerful part of the gift dialogue.

A more intimate aspect of Henry's giving was the use of tokens to embody favour or assurance. The politics of access and intimacy with the king, always important in personal monarchy, became crucial in the dangerous environment of the Henrician Court. The gift that was a seal of royal favour might provide a security that might mean the difference between life and death. The famous examples are those of the 'great ryng of gold with a Turkkas for a token' that Henry Norris delivered to Wolsey from the king in 1529 when the minister was living in disgrace at Esher. This was followed by a further ring delivered by John Russell, and then another 'engraved [with] the Kyng's visage within a Rubye', sent when Wolsey was sick. This last gesture was a very public act of grace, since Henry constrained Anne Boleyn to give as well (see Figure 4.5).¹⁴⁵ Less

¹⁴¹ Cavendish, *Thomas Wolsey*, 25–6.

¹⁴² Nicholas Harris Nicolas (ed.), *Privy Purse Expenses of King Henry VIII* (London: W. Pickering, 1827), 89, 173, 277; 6, 10, 42, 181.

¹⁴³ *LP IV*: ii 3246, 4335, 4356, 4675–6; *XIV*: ii, 782, p. 338 (10th December, 1538).

¹⁴⁴ Maria Hayward, *Dress at the Court of Henry VIII*, has very full detail of these gifts drawn from the wardrobe accounts, 121–4.

¹⁴⁵ Cavendish, *Thomas Wolsey*, 102, 111, 120–1.



Fig. 4.5 Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn Send a Token to Wolsey.

Douce MS. 363. © Bodleian Library.

intimate, but also showing direct personal favour, was the £50 that Henry gifted to his wayward Gentleman of the Privy Chamber, Francis Bryan, when the latter was on embassy in France in 1531.¹⁴⁶ Otherwise what we know of royal giving largely derives from the flood of land and office released by the dissolution of the monasteries and the appropriation of episcopal lands. At least some of those whose fortunes were made by this royal giving articulated permanent gratitude. Sir Anthony Denny, Groom of the Stool in the last fraught years of the reign, prefaced the bequests in his will with a paean to the ‘princelye lyberalitie’ of his late master, whose generosity established ‘all that I leve or can leve . . . he being thonly gever of all’.¹⁴⁷

The attitudes of Edward VI and Mary I to gifting can scarcely be discerned given the paucity of sources for the mid-century. In Edward’s case, however, there is one telling indication of royal sentiment. His Privy Purse accounts for 1551–2 include a variety of predictably small rewards for gifts, but three that stand out. A Frenchman who gave the king a translation of Isocrates’s *Orations* into French received £50, various Germans and ‘other his Mat[jes]tie subiectes’ £160 for books

¹⁴⁶ Nicolas, *Privy Purse*, 244.

¹⁴⁷ TNA, PROB 11/32/38.

made as presents, and John Calvin £37 10s for his *Commentaries on Isaiah*.¹⁴⁸ These are quite disproportionate sums when most rewards, or gifts, were for under £10, and must surely indicate the importance that the young king attached to such gestures of learning and godly Protestantism. Mary, on the other hand, made one of her few distinctive gift gestures when she presented Cardinal Pole with a mitre and crozier at his enthronement as Archbishop of Canterbury. In a neat affirmation of her broader convictions she had the crozier made from silver received from churches in the previous reign.¹⁴⁹

Much has already been said about Elizabeth's attitudes to gifting. In principle, reward, her favoured form of generosity, followed good service. In a unique example of the queen giving large-scale art to a subject, she presented Francis Walsingham with the *Allegory of the Tudor Succession*, probably painted by Lucas de Heere in 1572. The inscription reads: 'The Quene to Walsingham this tablet sente/ Mark of her Peoples and her owne Contente.' The 'contente', if the proposed dating is correct, was that Walsingham had played a successful role in the signing of the Treaty of Blois.¹⁵⁰ The context in which Sir Francis Drake received his magnificent cameo jewel is less clear: but it must have been given between 1586 and 1591. Its dual image of an African man and European woman can be interpreted as expressing the queen's imperial ambitions defended by her naval hero. Rewards might follow also from effective embassies, as when Lord North was finally granted a long lease of the Bishop of Ely's manor of Somersham, Huntingdonshire, only when he had completed his 1574 embassy to France.¹⁵¹ But it is the growing perception of gifts as part of the dance of courtship that is most characteristic of the Elizabethan regime in its maturity. The queen as princess had used her gifts to her father, Katherine Parr, and her brother, as a kind of wooing, telling her brother when she sent him her picture that he had the outward shadow of her body while her 'inward mind wisheth that the body itself were oftener in your presence'.¹⁵² That sense of the queen's body conjured by art is surely an element in the development of the miniature and the cameo portraits that flourished from the middle years of the reign. Although little can be said about whether the queen herself gave some of the images, their prominence in courtier portraits surely underlines intimacy as well as more generalized loyalty to the monarch.¹⁵³

The rhetoric of courtship, growing more exaggerated as the reign proceeded, placed the initiative in the hands of those who adored their mistress/majesty. The

¹⁴⁸ TNA, E101/426/8. Calvin's *Commentaries* were dedicated to Edward and came accompanied with a letter dated by Simler as 1st January, 1551, which identifies the gift, but avoids reference to the New Year: Hastings Robinson (ed.), *Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Parker Society, 1847), ii, 707–11.

¹⁴⁹ BL, Add. MS. 62525.

¹⁵⁰ Roy C. Strong, *Gloriana: the Portraits of Elizabeth I* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987), 71–3.

¹⁵¹ *CSP For, 1572–4*, 560–64; HMC, *Salisbury*, ii, 120.

¹⁵² Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, ed. Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 35–6.

¹⁵³ See in particular the series of images of Sir Christopher Hatton holding a prominent cameo image of Elizabeth. On miniatures and the difficulty of tracing early ownership see Roy C. Strong, *English Renaissance Miniatures* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1983).

lover in thrall to a woman and the courtier seeking suitable reward were conflated. 'And shal I live on yearth to be her thrall/ And shall I sue and serve her all in vaine?' asks one of the Earl of Oxford's poems, not directly addressing the queen, though with her presence veiled behind the words.¹⁵⁴ Elizabeth's response to these pressures was, as we have seen, to seek to balance grace and gratitude, generosity and thanks. Sometimes exaggerated thanks might suffice—'she never had any [horse] that she had a greater liking to' she insisted on reporting to the donor, the Earl of Shrewsbury.¹⁵⁵ Sometimes it was wiser to return counter-gifts. The queen gave Lady Bridget Manners a present which the countess assured him would be made an heirloom for 'my best beloved child', responding to tokens that her majesty thought 'wourth both best acceptance and thanks'.¹⁵⁶ A gift of a butterfly of mother of pearl to Sir Thomas Heneage was a response to the 'bodkin and pendant' sent to her. The bond between giver and receiver could also be displayed in the afterlife of the gift: clothing was worn ostentatiously in Court, jewels were displayed to express a relationship, often of a serious political kind, with the giver. The bodkin and pendant, she assured Heneage, would be worn on 'that eare that shoulde heare nothing that sholde hurte him'.¹⁵⁷ Wearing the Earl of Hertford's jewel in open Court was regarded as a marked honour, and stimulated the circulation of offerings when the earl promised her a better one.¹⁵⁸ The queen also showed consummate skill in appropriating to herself the praise for gifts designed for others. When Gilbert, Lord Talbot, managed to extract £1000 from his father the Earl of Shrewsbury towards settlement of his debts, the queen told Gilbert that the money was 'as well geven to her' as was the jewel she had recently received from Shrewsbury.¹⁵⁹

Such conscious care in the use of gifts in the management of courtly relations was undercut by the importunity of suitors and royal greed for desirable offerings. A well-known example of the brutal calculus of what was possible in pursuit of favour comes from the letters of Elizabeth, Lady Russell. Lady Russell expressed her irritation with the need for repeated giving. In a letter to her nephew, Robert Cecil, in 1600, she itemized her offerings, all designed to elicit a favourable response to her need to protect her lease of Donnington Castle. Twelve years before she had given 'a gown and petticoat of such tissue as should have been for the queen of Scots wedding garment, but I got then for my queen', followed by a canopy of tissue, two hats with jewels; on one of which the jewel cost above £100, and finally a gift of £30 in gold. The whole had cost Lady Russell above £500, to no end.¹⁶⁰

A crude example of this kind shows that Elizabeth had to seek to preserve her freedom within the gift economy. Actions like those of Lady Russell were met

¹⁵⁴ Quoted in Steven W. May, *The Elizabethan Courtier Poets: the Poems and their Contexts* (London: University of Missouri Press, 1991), 276. See also Alison V. Scott, *Selfish Gifts: the Politics of Exchange and English Courtly Literature 1580–1628* (Madison, WI: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), 63–5.

¹⁵⁵ Lodge, *Illustrations of British History*, ii, 378.

¹⁵⁶ HMC, *Rutland*, i, 304–6.

¹⁵⁷ HMC, *Finch*, i, 24–5.

¹⁵⁸ HMC, *Bath*, iv, 185.

¹⁵⁹ HMC, *Bath*, v, *Talbot, Dudley and Devereux Papers*, 60.

¹⁶⁰ HMC, *Salisbury*, x, 52.

either with equivocation or outright refusal of a suit. Lady Russell's jewel (so she claimed) was to have been returned to her 'but it was not'. Even in the difficult years at the end of the reign the queen expected her subjects to maintain the fiction of spontaneous generosity, and for gifts to express gratitude for royal largesse rather than seeking to influence outcomes. When Rowland Whyte needed favours for his master, Sir Robert Sidney, he was firmly advised by the ladies of the Privy Chamber to have a present ready, but not to be given 'till either your leave, the matter of Otford, or the title of honor be granted'.¹⁶¹ In the Essex crisis there was a more public confrontation on the propriety of gifts. The Countess of Essex offered a jewel on behalf of her disgraced husband in November 1599, 'but it would not be accepted'. Then a 'very rich jewel' was presented on the earl's behalf in January 1600, which 'was neither received nor rejected', and in February that year the dowager Countess of Leicester, Essex's mother, offered a spectacular gown costing '£100 at least', to which Elizabeth responded ambiguously 'that it was not fit for her to desire what she did'.¹⁶²

Such refusals, however, might be argued to have come too late. Essex's career at Court had been posited on his ability constantly to increase the sense of royal indebtedness to him, to show through meritorious action that the flow of royal generosity to him could never be sufficient to reward his actions.¹⁶³ He needed to master the mistress to whom he paid assiduous court, and much of his earlier career was owed to the skill with which he positioned himself within the gift economy ruled by a woman. When Elizabeth, with the leverage of the Cecilian grouping at Court, succeeded in maintaining control over the flow of largesse, alienation of men such as Essex was inevitable. The bitter response is exemplified in a letter of Sir Walter Raleigh to Sir Robert Cecil in 1602:

It gre[v]es mee to finde with what difficulty and torment to my sealf I obtayne the smallest favour. Her Majesty knows that I am reddey to spend all I have, and my life, for her in a day, and that I have but the keeping of that I have, for all I will sell for her in an howre and spend it in her service.¹⁶⁴

It is not surprising that some of the disappointed, like Harington, began to mutter of tyranny and to look for better times in the prospect of regime change.

¹⁶¹ Whyte to Sidney, 21st February, 1600: HMC, *De L'Isle and Dudley*, ii, 440.

¹⁶² HMC, *De L'Isle and Dudley*, ii, 418, 427, 443–4.

¹⁶³ Paul Hammer, *The Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics: The Political Career of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, 1585–1597* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 336–7.

¹⁶⁴ *The Letters of Sir Walter Raleigh*, ed. Agnes Latham and Joyce Youings (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), 236.

5

The Early Stuarts and Courtly Gifting

PROGRESSES AND FEASTS

In a Christmas masque at the end of 1603 the Three Graces danced before King James. While goddesses bestowed symbolic gifts of the season the Graces sang:

Desert, Reward and Gratitude,
The Graces of Society,
Do here with hand in hand conclude
The blessed chaine of amity.
For 1. I deserve, 2. I give, 3. I thank.¹

The accession of James I had been eagerly anticipated by those who thought that they deserved reward and gratitude. On his journey south to take the throne the king helped to affirm these views. Admittedly he expected subjects first to show their gratitude for his secure accession, and his new cities, towns, and individual subjects obliged. James made appropriate entries into Newcastle, York, and Newark, was received with great largesse by private hosts, and accumulated vast trains of followers. Newcastle offered up a purse of gold, York a gold cup filled with gold coin, and Newark a 'faire gilt cup'. Although there is less evidence of gifting from private hosts, Thomas Millington, publishing the story of the triumphal progress, commented explicitly on Sir Oliver Cromwell's presentation of a standing cup of gold, horses, hounds, and 'divers hawkes of excellent wing'. Sir Edward Denny, Sheriff of Huntingdonshire, gave 'a gallant horse, a riche saddle, and furniture correspondent to the same'.² All this raises doubts about the comment of the Venetian ambassador that James's magnanimity was displayed in his refusal to take costly gifts from his hosts.³ The ambassador also commented that the costs of all of this to subjects had in practice been enormous, but

¹ John Nichols, *The Progresses, Processions and Magnificent Festivities of King James the First*, 4 vols. (London: J. B. Nichols, 1828), i, 309.

² Thomas Millington, *The True Narration of the Entertainment of his Royall Maiestie, from the Time of his Departure from Edenbrough; till his Receiving at London* (London: Thomas Creede, 1603). Printed in Nichols, *Progresses of James the First*, i, 69, 78, 89, 98–101, 105.

³ *CSP Ven*, 1603–7, 25. This may in part be a garbled understanding of the proclamation of 5th April endeavouring to restrict the 'resort' of people to the king on his journey south in the interests of security, but also to protect hosts against the burdens of excessive hospitality: James F. Larkin and Paul L. Hughes (eds.), *Stuart Royal Proclamations: volume I, Royal Proclamations of King James I, 1603–1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 5–6.

had been done without stint for 'although the English usually hold that interest and honour coincide, and many of them do not reckon shameful that which breeds gold', yet now they could never be accused of avarice.⁴ James and his retinue were duly dazzled, though one of his train complained perspicaciously that 'this people will spoil a gud king' with their obsequious generosity.⁵

The flow of benefits given in wholehearted display of loyalism and relief at the succession was now met by equal reciprocity from the king, rather than niggardly demands upon his subjects. And James obliged, concerned to show through his lavish offering of knighthood, culminating in the 230 knights 'or better' dubbed on his journey south; a very different view of royal generosity to that demonstrated by Elizabeth in the previous decade.⁶ From the 'rich and bounteous rewards' given to the soldiers who welcomed him at Berwick, to generous gifts to released prisoners, and the reversion of a manor for the host of the Bear Inn in Doncaster where he was lodged for a night, the new king showed himself aware of the need for largesse that came with his new magnificence.⁷ The return expected by James's generous subjects was less the material gift than the willingness to listen to their petitions. Among the press of individual suitors approaching the king there were significant approaches by the godly ministers offering the Millenary Petition, and the explicit comments of Richard Martin, speaking on behalf of the Londoners, denouncing bribes and monopolies. 'No more', said Martin, 'shall bribes blinde the eyes of the wise' nor men have their 'face grinded with extorted sutes, nor [their] marrow suckt with most odious and unjust monopolies'.⁸ All of this must have served to heightened expectations not only of the capacity of James immediately to make the kingdom anew, but of the possibilities of benefit to be received through the visits of the monarch to his people.

It is an assumption of much Stuart historiography that James and Charles failed to live up to this paradigm of openness and political dialogue mediated through the public exchanges of progress.⁹ However, a careful review of James's royal entries into cities and towns should qualify this conclusion.¹⁰ In his travels in the first two years of the reign, in 1612, and again in his journey to and from

⁴ CSP Ven, 1603–7, 27.

⁵ Quoted in Jenny Wormald, 'James VI and I: Two Kings or One?', *History* 68: 223 (1983), 190.

⁶ Nichols, *Progresses of James the First*, i, 120.

⁷ Millington, *True Narration*, sigs. C3^r, C4^r, E1^r.

⁸ Nichols, *Progresses of James the First*, i, 130–1.

⁹ See, for example, R. Malcolm Smuts, 'Public Ceremony and Royal Charisma: The English Royal Entry in London 1485–1642', in A. L. Beier, David Cannadine, and Joel Rosenheim (eds.), *The First Modern Society: Essays in English History in Honour of Lawrence Stone* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 65–93. The behaviour of Charles has provoked more debate than that of James. See Richard Cust, *Charles I: a Political Life* (Harlow: Longman, 2005), 166; Charles Carlton, *Charles I: the Personal Monarch* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1995), 123. This is now less obviously a truism, since for Charles this is an issue recently debated in articles by Mark Kishlansky 'Charles I: a Case of Mistaken Identity', *PP* 189 (2005), 41–80, and the response by Clive Holmes, 'Charles I: a Case of Mistaken Identity', *PP* 205 (2009), 175–82; with Kishlansky's 'Reply', 213–19.

¹⁰ The importance of Jacobean progresses and the king's public visibility is stressed in Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars: Promoting Kings and Commonwealths in England 1603–1660* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 104–7.

Scotland in 1617, he performed the role of listening monarch with much the same formality as Elizabeth had done. He received the gifts of at least sixteen cities and towns in these years—Newcastle and York having the misfortune to experience two formal visits—and with visits to Cambridge, Oxford, Northampton, and Nottingham in other years the total was brought to around twenty. Only Bristol and Norwich among the major cities of the realm did not receive the king, and in the former case the entertainment of Queen Anne in 1613 did something to make good the deficit. On her West Country progress Anne, who was recognized to be more at ease with crowds of subjects than her husband, was touched by fervent displays of loyalism in Wells and Bristol—the Venetian ambassador commented on the crowd scenes in Wells and the cacophony of voices blessing and wishing her prosperity.¹¹ But James also seems to have endured visits with reasonable equanimity: order was preserved, large gifts were given, and speeches of welcome continued to offer the opportunity for complaint about the woes of the community. At Lincoln in 1617, James showed ‘great delight and content’ at the gift and moved his hat while thanking the Corporation, while a footman carried the cup in procession all the way to the cathedral. In Stafford the cup was again carried after thanks, though foul weather prevented much of a procession. The remarkable Coventry Cup (given unusually at departure) elicited an even more explicit thanks, with the king’s assurance that ‘wheresoever he went, he would drink in his Coventry cup’ (see Figure 5.1).¹² Warwick Corporation, or possibly their patron Fulke Greville, gave a cup sufficiently spectacular to be sent as a gift to the Tsar.¹³

The value of the presents offered by the towns seems in general to have increased and not only because of inflation or because now three gifts often had to be provided for king, queen, and prince where one had sufficed before. The town of Oxford had given a cup of silver costing £10 and £40 in old gold in 1566; in 1605 the king’s gift was a gold standing cup worth £50 filled with £50 of gold. Coventry presented a purse with £100 in gold angels in 1566; even the young Princess Elizabeth who visited in 1604 had a silver-gilt cup worth £29 16s 8d, and in 1617 the town excelled itself with the cup costing in all £172, with a further £100 in gold inside.¹⁴ Towns and cities continued to worry about the reputational damage that might be done by inadequate gifts. When Leicester knew they were to be visited in 1612 they sent the town clerk to Newark and Nottingham to ‘see how they [sic] Townsmen entertained the King and Prince thither’ and spent £40 on presents.¹⁵ For Anne of Denmark’s visit to Bristol the concern was about the level of public display in presentation. The city sought the advice of ‘some honourable

¹¹ James Stokes (ed.), *REED Somerset*, 2 vols. (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1996), i, 373–4.

¹² Nichols, *Progresses of James the First*, iii, 262, 414, 425.

¹³ Olga Dimitreva and Tessa Murdoch (eds.), *Tudors, Stuarts and the Russian Tsars* (London: V. & A., 2013), 26, pl. 111.

¹⁴ Nichols’s, *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*, i, 472, 455; Nichols, *Progresses of James the First*, i, 543, 429; iii, 425.

¹⁵ Quoted in Catherine Patterson, *Urban Patronage in Early Modern England* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 18. In 1625, when preparing to receive Charles and Henrietta Maria, the Corporation of Dover sent a councillor to see the cups purchased by Canterbury, to ensure

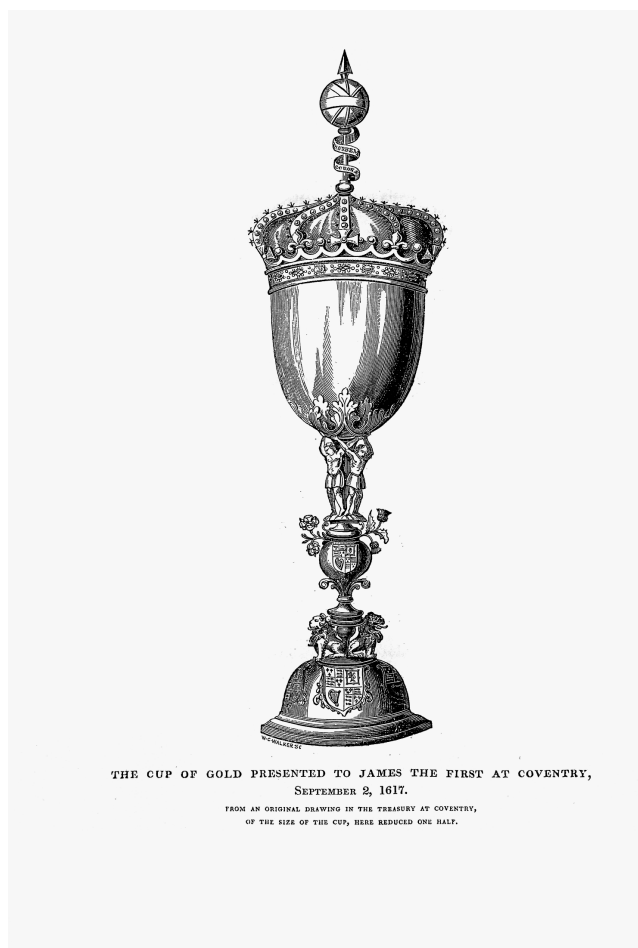


Fig. 5.1 The Coventry Cup, 1617. John Nichols, *Progresses, Processions and Magnificent Festivities of King James the First*.

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person neare unto hir Maiestie', about how to give—publicly at the greeting ceremony, or privately in the royal lodgings. The honourable person advised the latter, but in practice the mayor gave her the purse of gold pieces publicly at the greeting ceremony.¹⁶

The Scots experienced particular difficulty in the process of greeting and giving, since they had not previously had to compare themselves directly to English

that their own would not be inferior: BL, Add. MS. 29623, fo. 68^r. In 1603, however, Southampton seems to have escaped with a 'small gift' alleging decay: Nichols, *Progresses of James the First*, i, 278.

¹⁶ Mark C. Pilkinton (ed.), *REED: Bristol* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1997), 176.

ceremonies. When Edinburgh prepared to receive the king in 1617 the Council recorded in their minute book a full discussion of their motives for lavish giving. They understood that in 1603 each town receiving the king had presented 'ane coup and certain quantity of gold according to the estate and rank of the Toun' and that the same was planned as he moved north on this occasion. It was therefore decided 'to eschew any imputatioun of neglect of dewtie' to purchase a basin and gold, which was duly presented on his arrival.¹⁷ Such behaviour was clearly novel to Edinburgh and did not, apparently, penetrate the other towns visited north of the Border. Full records of the speeches made to their returned monarch survive: there was no mention of gifts given. On the other hand, Edinburgh's generosity reaped an impressive reputational reward in that John Chamberlain reported from London that the king had been given 10,000 Scottish marks of gold.¹⁸

James, like Elizabeth, recognized that these displays of loyalty demanded reciprocal gifts, and his views of kingly largesse sometimes disposed him to more immediate return than his predecessor. Coventry gained an enlargement of its charter and the right to erect a military garden; York was promised assistance with the navigation of the River Ouse.¹⁹ All of this points to the seriousness of monarchical purpose in encountering subjects via progress. But we need to modify the picture in at least two ways. Firstly, the king's penchant for informal behaviour meant that his progresses were not a pure replica of Elizabeth's. James's taste for spontaneity could occasionally irritate his loyal townsmen. For example, the king visited Cambridge twice in 1615, wishing to see the scholars undertake a repeat performance of their comedy *Ignoramus*. At the first visit the Corporation had presented a cup to the king and one to Prince Charles at the collective cost of £56, with much protestation that this was a widow's mite 'as a pledge of our lives and goods, to be redie for defence of your royall person'.²⁰ At his return James was simply greeted by the mayor at his coach, and presented with gloves: it was alleged that the poverty of the Corporation meant that nothing of value could be bestowed. The king was claimed to have taken this in good part.²¹

Secondly, the royal passion for the chase, and enthusiasm for Newmarket and Royston, limited James's formal progress travelling and the ceremoniousness of his visits to his individual subjects. Nobles and gentlemen who received the king often persisted with masques of welcome and gift gestures. There were some lavish

¹⁷ Nichols, *Progresses of James the First*, iii, 317.

¹⁸ *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 1939), ii, 78. The gift was of 500 double angels (English coins), worth 13 4d a piece. It is not entirely clear if Chamberlain is reporting in English or Scottish marks—on the 12:1 ratio that operated on exchange between the two realms under James, 10,000 Scottish marks would be approximately £550 sterling.

¹⁹ Nichols, *Progresses of James the First*, iii, 262, 414, 425–6, 272.

²⁰ Nichols, *Progresses of James the First*, iii, 48–9. James may have had reason to be irritated in his turn. Miles Corbet attended the progress, and in a satirical poem mocked the university and town (he was an Oxford man). The town gave plate 'But cry'd, Oh! Look not in great king,/ For there is in it just nothing': Charles Henry Cooper, *Annals of Cambridge*, 5 vols. (Cambridge: Warwick, 1842–52), iii, 76.

²¹ Nichols, *Progresses of James the First*, iii, 86.

greetings and shows—at Grafton in 1603, at Theobalds before Salisbury surrendered it, and at Houghton on the journey home from Scotland in 1617. And in some form or other the king continued to tolerate a degree of masquing and dancing, probably with symbolic gifts, as when the daughters of Sir John Crofts presented ‘The Visit of the Nine Goddesses’ at Little Saxham, Suffolk, in 1621.²² Otherwise the king left such matters to the Christmas season in London, or to his wife and children. They all welcomed ceremony—as for example when Anne and Henry were entertained at Althorpe with a Ben Jonson masque in 1603 and given a jewel by Mab, queen of the fairies, or in 1613 when Anne on her progress to the West was received by the Earl of Suffolk’s four sons at Caversham, ‘gallantly entertained’ and presented on leaving of a rich coverlet and other things worth £1500. Gifts offered in the context of welcoming performance continued to be a feature of the Stuart masque.²³

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of the progresses for king and Privy Council was that, however generous his hosts, costs to the Crown constantly rose. In 1576, an ‘overlong’ progress was reckoned to have cost the Treasury £2000 above normal charges: by 1613 Chamberlain’s unreliable calculations suggested that Anne’s summer travel would cost £30,000.²⁴ The journey to Scotland was, of course, exceptional, but here Chamberlain reported more convincingly that it is ‘like to prove a very costly viage every way’.²⁵ Charles also had the substantial expense of his 1633 Scottish coronation, and it is hardly surprising that this cost was one of the restraining elements in his choice of summer travel, especially in the years of warfare at the beginning of the reign. The return, in entertainment provided, gifts given, and loyalty displayed, must have weighed in favour of progresses, but something more private, which avoided moving the whole Court, surely had its attractions. In practice it was virtually impossible to constrain the entourage: a report of 1638 complained that over 400 carriages moved with the king, though the norm allowed by the Household was 257.²⁶

²² C. E. McGee, ‘“The Visit of the Nine Goddesses”: a Masque at Sir John Croft’s House’, *English Literary Renaissance* 21 (1991), 371–84.

²³ Ben Jonson, *A Particular Entertainment of the Queene and Prince Their Highnesse to Althorpe* (London: E. Blount, 1603, attached to *King James Entertainment*). Nichols, *Progresses of James the First*, i, 181. Thomas Campion, *A Relation of the Late Royall Entertainment by the Right Honorable the Lord Knowles, at Cawsome-House Neere Redding: to Our Most Gracious Queene, Queene Anne* (London: I. Budge, 1613); *Letters of Chamberlain*, i, 450.

²⁴ BL, Lansdowne MS 21, fos. 130, 139^v. Edmund Kerchever Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), i, 118. *Letters of Chamberlain*, i, 446.

²⁵ *Letters of Chamberlain*, ii, 63. It was, of course, also a great burden for hosts. It has been calculated that the four-day visit to Carlisle and Broughton on the return journey from Scotland cost around £1500, the great majority of which was funded by the Earl of Cumberland: Richard T. Spence, ‘A Royal Progress in the North: James I at Carlisle Castle and the Feast at Broughton, August 1617’, *Northern History* 27 (1991), 41–89.

²⁶ CSPD, 1637–8, 203. The nobility travelling to Scotland were expected to pay their own way, but the Crown had to fund a swollen Household: Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, ed. W. Dunn Macray, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), i, 100.

Charles moved, and moved his Court, as much as his predecessors. The debate about his actions focuses on his purposes in so doing: only in 1633 on his journey to Scotland and in 1636 on the Western progress culminating in Oxford, is it argued, did he fully participate in presenting himself to his people.²⁷ Neither he, nor indeed his father, saw the summer escape from London as the necessary opportunity, to quote the Earl of Newcastle advising Charles II, to 'shew your Selfe Gloriously to your people; like a God'.²⁸ A problem here lies with the sources, which do not describe Charles's progresses in the loving detail of Elizabeth's or even James's.²⁹ The pamphlets that had provided this earlier knowledge have largely vanished, leaving only contemporary correspondence, town records, and the Jonsonian masques, which marked the king's visit to Welbeck Abbey in 1633 and Bolsover in 1634.³⁰ Much of the evidence about gifting practices vanishes too: the sumptuous reception at Welbeck may have included them; the few civic receptions certainly did, but we lack many details.

At least at the beginning of the reign gifts continued to be given in displays of loyalty. Dover engaged in busy bustle in 1625 planning the purchase of silver-gilt cups to welcome Charles and his bride 'in token of this Towneshippes loves, affections, and wel wishes'.³¹ By the time York received Charles on his way north in 1633 the duty of displaying deference through largesse was apparently still in place. The king was welcomed with full ceremony and proffered a fine silver-gilt cup with the arms of the king and the city. The cup was then claimed by the Marquis of Hamilton, as a perquisite belonging to the Master of the Horse. The city account noted this development in significant language—the cup was claimed 'as dew to his place' and this was 'perceived' by the city, a rhetoric that surely robs the gift of some of its symbolic force. The following royal visit in 1639 also saw a cup given and passed to the Master of the Horse, and it is surely understandable that when a second Scots' War visit occurred only money was given to the king.³² The decline of formal gifting as a seal of loyalty was beginning to show itself in York on the eve of political crisis.

²⁷ Holmes, 'Debate: Charles I', 178–81, though this also includes discussion of the progress culminating at Bolsover in 1634.

²⁸ Thomas P. Slaughter (ed.), *Ideology and Politics on the Eve of the Restoration: Newcastle's Advice to Charles II* (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 1984), 45.

²⁹ For James, see in particular the detailed description of the 1604 London entry: Malcolm Smuts (ed.) *The Whole Royal and Magnificent Entertainment of King James through the City of London, 15 March, 1604*, in Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (eds.), *Thomas Middleton: the Collected Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 219–56. Also H. R., *The Most Royall and Honourable Entertainment of the Famous and Renowned King, Christiern the Fourth, King of Denmarke* (London: George Eld for H. Roberts, 1606).

³⁰ The only full description is that of Charles's entry into Edinburgh in 1633: William Drummond, *The Entertainment of the High and Mighty Monarch Charles King of Great Britain, France and Ireland, Into his Auncient and Royall City of Edinburgh, the Fifteenth of June, 1633* (Edinburgh: John Wreittoun, 1633). The masques are 'The King's Entertainment at Welbeck' and 'Love's Welcome to Bolsover', in C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson (eds.), *Ben Jonson*, vii (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), 789–814.

³¹ BL, Add. MS. 29623, fo. 68^r.

³² Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson (eds.), *REED York*, 2 vols. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979), i, 587, 599, 611.

London offers uniquely detailed evidence of the performance of giving to royalty. There was the long-established structure of ceremonial royal entries on the one hand, and of gifting by the Corporation or the mercantile community on the other. In the reigns of James and Charles royal entries were a more sensitive issue than they had been under the Tudors: here the Stuarts' much-remarked distaste for crowds at times altered customary behaviour, though James sometimes endured the throng, while Charles consciously withdrew.³³ Support of the city élites were, however, an abiding preoccupation for the cash-strapped regimes, and mercantile interest in privilege kept relationships close if not always cordial. A recent study of the grand entertainment provided by the Merchant Taylors' Company for James in 1607 exemplifies the bonds, and the role that formal gift-exchange played within them.³⁴ A loan made the previous year had not yet been repaid, and the Crown urgently needed to retain the appearance of honourable behaviour and creditworthiness to secure future support.³⁵ The Company, in its turn, needed assurance that the privileges of the East India Company would be maintained. The hospitality provided for the king and Prince Henry was extraordinary—£1000 was spent on the feast. Ben Jonson was employed to write the speech of welcome and advise on the production of the music, and his poems for the occasion lightly veil the economic nature of the exchange in appropriately visionary language. The 'glad hartes' of the Company offered true welcome, assuring James '... Wellcome ours shall pay/ They shall: Nor is there Losse in Love./ Free gratitude to powers above/ finds faith & favour in the way.'³⁶ Formal gifts were given: purses of £100 gold coins to James and £50 to Henry.³⁷ In return the royal token was Henry's acceptance of the freedom of the Company, and his willing performance after dinner of the full ritual of incorporation. The whole performance of exchange, which the Merchant Taylors recorded with pride in a circulated set of manuscripts, affirmed that wealth could begin to break down the asymmetry created by status, and (in theory at least), bind the Crown to future generous action.³⁸

Much other giving by official London in this period follows the customary paths of deference and loyalty. Visiting royalty had to be feasted and offered rich gifts.³⁹

³³ Sharpe, *Image Wars*, 93–100; 230–4, though Sharpe questions whether there is convincing evidence of Charles's withdrawal from formal exchanges with his capital.

³⁴ Gabriel Heaton, *Writing and Reading Royal Entertainments: From George Gascoigne to Ben Jonson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 128–57.

³⁵ Robert Ashton, *The Crown and the Money Market, 1603–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), 114–22.

³⁶ Quoted in Heaton, *Writing and Reading*, at 149.

³⁷ Charles Matthew Clode (ed.), *Memorials of the Guild of Merchant Taylors* (London: Harrison, 1875), 268.

³⁸ Heaton, *Writing and Reading*, 158–60.

³⁹ Christian IV was given a cup of gold as he passed through the City: the Elector Palatine a feast and a gift costing £262 at his marriage to Princess Elizabeth, who was herself given a chain of pearls worth £2000: LMA, COL/SJ/27/119. The tendency of letter writers to exaggerate the value of presents is shown by Chamberlain's report to Winwood that the gift to Frederick was worth almost £500: *Letters of Chamberlain*, i, 384. The Elector's son and heir Charles was again entertained and given a gift by the City in 1635: William Knowler (ed.), *The Earl of Strafford's Letters and Speeches*, 2 vols. (Dublin: R. Reilly for Robert Owen, 1739), i, 504.

Any royal entry or passage through the City required presents, and there was an abiding obligation to mark all formal rites of passage and other major events with gold.⁴⁰ This becomes clearly visible when the Chamberlains' Accounts begin to survive in the 1630s. In the year from October 1632 to November 1633, £500 was given to the young Prince Charles when he came to view the Lord Mayor's pageant; £2000 presented to the king at Theobalds on his departure for Scotland; £737 worth of gold plate given to Henrietta Maria on a formal visit while the king was away; and £500 for the standing cup and gold given at the christening of the Duke of York.⁴¹ There was no significant change here before the Civil War: for example, the Corporation displayed its deference in the offering of the 'beau present' it made to the French queen Mother on her visit in 1638–9 (see Figure 5.2).⁴² A latter-day Chapuys might have judged from the evidence of gifts and ritual deference that there was little evidence of political breakdown between the monarch and the City. The closer reading at the end of this chapter will question this sanguine conclusion.

COSTS AND BENEFITS

Royal gifting within the Court had much the same pattern of continuity and change as the progress exchanges. The New Year's ceremony had its own momentum, sustained as it was by the routines of the Jewel House, the need of the royal household for fees and gratuities, and the assumptions of the élite. James had inherited much of the structure of household that had surrounded Elizabeth, and was disinclined to change much beyond the Bedchamber.⁴³ It is from the early years of the reign that we have a well-known description of how the Earl of Huntingdon's servants were to present the king's New Year's gift and receive recompense.⁴⁴ The system was perpetuated, surviving until the Civil War, then being revived again under Charles II. The limited evidence for James's reign shows the king receiving standardized gifts of money from all his senior peers and bishops, and returning plate in carefully calibrated quantities.⁴⁵ In 1605–6 earls gave £20 each, and were

⁴⁰ In 1559, Elizabeth was given 1000 marks in gold at her entry, and promised 'to be as good unto you, as ever Queen was to her people': Germaine Warkentin (ed.), *The Queen's Majesty's Passage and Related Documents* (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2004), 86–7. At James's March 1604 entry three gold cups for the king, queen and prince cost £416: Nichols, *Progresses of James the First*, i, 407.

⁴¹ LMA, COL/SJ/27/120.

⁴² Jean Puget de la Serre, *Histoire de l'entree de la Reyne Mere du Roy Tres Chrestien, dans la Grande-Bretagne* (London, G. Thomason and O. Pullen, 1639), fo. 0^r and v.

⁴³ Neil Cuddy, 'The Revival of the Entourage: the Bedchamber of James I, 1603–1625', in David Starkey et al. (eds.), *The English Court from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War* (London: Longman, 1987), 173–225.

⁴⁴ Nichols, *Progresses of James the First*, i, 471.

⁴⁵ The two survivors are for 1605–6, BL, Add MS. 8126, which is printed in Nicholls, *Progresses of James the First*, i, 593–607; and 1610–11, TNA, SP14/61/39. The latter records the king's gifts only. Since we know from Caroline survival that the lists must have been kept by the Jewel House it is tempting to blame the mismanagement of that office, particularly in the hands of Sir Henry Mildmay, for some of the losses. The Mildmay family later blamed the loss of papers on the chaos of civil war.

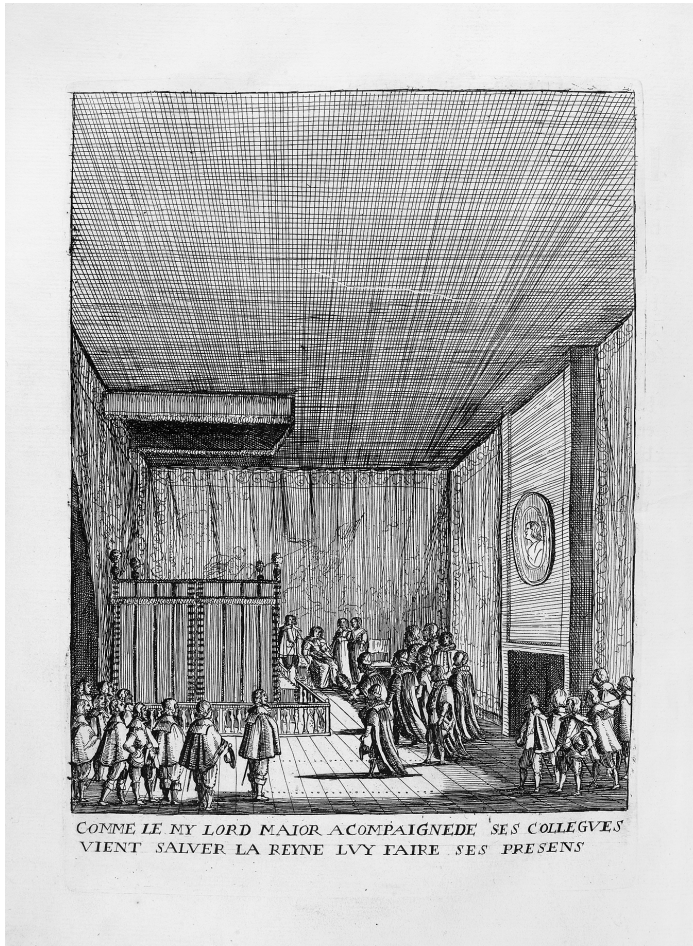


Fig. 5.2 Lord Mayor of London Presents a Gift to Marie de Medici. La Serre, *Histoire de l'Entree de la Reyne Mere* (1639).

© Bodleian Library.

rewarded with gilt plate weighing approximately 30 ounces. Occasionally some variation might occur: for example the Royal Almoner received more than other prelates, but only members of the household below stairs and a few specialists like Garter King of Arms gave individualized gifts and were rewarded in proportion with plate.⁴⁶

We might read this fixity of New Year's giving as evidence of the value James attached to the traditional relationship with the magnates. But there is also change after the extravagance of the later Elizabethan years. Dudley Carleton

⁴⁶ Nichols, *Progresses of James the First*, i, 593–98.

reported to Ralph Winwood in January 1605 that New Year's Day had passed at Court without 'any solemnity', that exorbitant gifts had been 'so far laid off, that the accustomed present of the purse and gold was hard to be had without asking'.⁴⁷ It appears that James's advisers quickly became conscious of the cost and benefit (or otherwise) of New Year's exchange and saw this as a possible target for economy. By 1605 the king had cut back his giving of plate from 4477 ounces to 2714 ounces.⁴⁸ In about 1610 the Earl of Salisbury ordered full calculation of costs, which showed that between 1603 and 1609 James lost £823 through the formal giving ceremony, and that he had been moving sharply into deficit. In the first year he had gained £275: by 1609 he lost £363. None of this was as problematic as the situation in the last five years of Elizabeth's reign, when £6672 had been lost by the Crown.⁴⁹ These were modest sums, and when Salisbury endeavoured to manage royal largesse through the so-called 'Book of Bounty', which would have prevented suitors from appealing directly for most gifts and grants, nothing was done about the New Year's ceremony.⁵⁰ This intensifying preoccupation with cost, however, was one of those many elements in Jacobean government which destabilized the performative possibilities of the gift in sustaining political relationships.

James's style of governance probably also diminished the courtly ritual of the New Year. He had a distaste for the formalized exchanges that required gifting to be structured by hierarchy and service. His own preference, to judge from the surviving warrants, was to give to his own family at the season—£1000 to Prince Henry, and jewels to Queen Anne and Princess Elizabeth.⁵¹ Or he might use the feast to make a quixotic gesture, as when in 1610 Lady Arbella Stewart had her return to favour signalled with a cupboard of plate and the payment of her debts.⁵² The favoured were also rewarded: Viscount Haddington, Robert Carr, and later George Villiers, were given jewels and tablets of gold with the king's picture, but it seems only when it suited his humour.⁵³ This impulsive pattern of royal largesse was one of the major elements behind the rapid expansion in the cost of 'free gifts'; the category of payments moved by royal warrant. From a starting point in 1603 of £11,741 they reached £78,791 by 1611, before falling away somewhat in later years.⁵⁴ The free gifts were a miscellany of the traditional offerings for christenings and marriages, and the plate needed

⁴⁷ Nichols, *Progresses of James the First*, i, 471.

⁴⁸ Arthur Collins, *The Jewels and Plate of Queen Elizabeth: the Inventory of 1574* (London: British Museum, 1955), 109.

⁴⁹ HMC *Salisbury*, xxi, 180; TNA SP 14/43/50. These sums all presumably reflect only the plate and coin passing through the hands of the Jewel House. The larger losses calculated for Elizabeth would then indicate that other items given, especially jewels, were not part of this profit and loss figure.

⁵⁰ TNA, SP14/37/72–6.

⁵¹ *CSPD*, 1603–10, 395, 489, 582.

⁵² *Letters of Chamberlain*, i, 294.

⁵³ *CSPD*, 1603–10, 417, 507. A good example is the gift to Villiers in 1619 of jewels and land previously belonging to Anne of Denmark: *Letters of Chamberlain*, ii, 237.

⁵⁴ Linda Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England* (London: Routledge, 1990), 35.

for diplomacy. They also included much of the immediate generosity of James to his Scottish followers, and to others who had performed some specific service for the Crown or had simply gained the king's ear.⁵⁵

James's vision of the largesse that became kings came to focus explicitly upon the two favourites of his later years: Carr and Villiers. Here the king's prodigality as a giver represented and articulated his honour, as well as the worthiness of his chosen creatures. 'No Prince,' he had observed in the 'Book of Bounty', 'is more desirous then wee to reward the Merittes of our servauntes.'⁵⁶ When Rubens designed the Whitehall Banqueting Hall ceiling in commemoration of James he had the monarch as Solomon, assailing avarice and celebrating a generosity which banished any notion of self-interest.⁵⁷ Lavish free gifts were given to Villiers in the later years of the reign: for example, he was allocated £30,000 in 1625.⁵⁸ Paradoxically, these offerings could be difficult for the recipient unless they could be labelled as free. When James sought to give his favourite the manor of Sherborne, Dorset, Buckingham was insistent in providing lands in return: 'my desire is that by this exchange the King have no disadvantage nor I any benefit... for I desire not to gain but by his Majesty's free gift'⁵⁹ The language of clientage and friendship became entangled with that of erotic bonding. Emotionally James claimed that he wanted 'only to live in the world for [Buckingham's] sake', while it was the latter's duty to offer a greatly enhanced gratitude for material gifts that he could never repay. In the end, he assured James, he could give 'nothing but silence' to 'my maker, my father, my all'.⁶⁰

The king's affection for chosen members of the Court, often the Scots, and preference for generosity governed by choice rather than custom, were brought together in his wedding gifts. At the marriage of Viscount Haddington to Elizabeth, daughter of the Earl of Sussex, in 1608, James drank the couple's health in a cup of gold, which was then sent to the bride, along with a basin, two livery pots, and three very fair standing cups, with a pension of £600 a year in survivorship. The gratitude was intensely personal, a part only of the reward for Haddington's crucial role in saving the king from the Gowrie conspirators.⁶¹ Three years earlier Sir Philip

⁵⁵ This material was brought together in print in 1651, presumably to illustrate monarchical prodigality: Anon, *An Abstract or Brief Declaration of the Present State of His Majesties Renew* (London: M.S., 1651).

⁵⁶ TNA, SP14/37/72.

⁵⁷ Linda Levy Peck, 'Benefits, Brokers and Beneficiaries: the Culture of Exchange in Seventeenth-Century England', in Bonnelyn Young Kunze and Dwight D. Brautigam (eds.), *Court, Country and Culture: Essays on Early Modern History in Honour of Perez Zagorin* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1992), 125.

⁵⁸ *CSPD*, 1623–5, 439; 247, 479. The Earls of Carlisle and Holland also benefited to the tune of £12,000: Barbara Donagan, 'A Courtier's Progress: Greed and Consistency in the Life of the Earl of Holland', *HJ* 19:2 (1976), 332.

⁵⁹ HMC 10th Report, Appendix 1, *Moray MSS*, quoted in Roger Lockyer, *Buckingham: The Life and Political Career of George Villiers, First Duke of Buckingham, 1592–1628* (London: Longman, 1981), 27. Carr seems to have been less sure-footed and intelligent in managing this demand for unstinting giving and praise, prompting complaints of unkindness both on personal and patronage grounds from the king: G. V. Akrigg (ed.), *Letters of King James VI and I* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 337.

⁶⁰ Lockyer, *Buckingham*, 198.

⁶¹ *Letters of Chamberlain*, i, 255.

Herbert had married Lady Susan Vere, with as much ceremony, said Carleton, as could be done a favourite, and the day was made by the king's provision of lands in the Isle of Sheppey 'passed and delivered... for the lady's jointure'.⁶² Robert Carr was treated with spectacular largesse both by king and toadying courtiers. 'Never', said John Tailor to the Earl of Cumberland, 'were there so many and so great gifts presented to a subject before'.⁶³ James's whole-hearted celebration of marriage and of the fecundity of the Court—in total antithesis to Elizabeth's behaviour—was articulated through his glittering gifts, and his support of the masques that accompanied a number of the celebrations.⁶⁴ The atmosphere of celebratory affect that was encouraged also lent a curious legitimacy to the king's trespass beyond the boundaries of friendship with his favourites to incorporate them through family and erotic metaphors.⁶⁵

Where the king led, others perforce followed. Lavish giving at Court continued to require the favoured in turn to display their bounty to the monarch and his family, while lesser mortals gave and served in order to ensure their place within the system of patronage. The courtly dance in which 'office of reward' was pursued continued much as before, and with some of the same frustrations. Sir William Cornwallis complained in 1605 that his attendance on the king had not resulted 'in any gift from his majesty' and he would be forced to leave Court.⁶⁶ Sir John Harington is another alienated gift-giver under Elizabeth, who hoped for better things under James. Despite the king's apparent gratitude for the 'rich gifts' of poems and lantern on the eve of Elizabeth's death, no substantial reward was forthcoming. In frustration, but not in despair, Harington transferred the political wisdom he wished to offer to the young Prince Henry.⁶⁷ Access to the 'other courts' of Anne of Denmark and Prince Henry enlarged the possibilities of patronage for suitors, though Anne demanded significant reward for her favours, and most of the promises Henry offered were inevitably *in futuro*. After his death and the rise of first Carr and then Villiers', offerings seeking patronage usually had to be funnelled through the favourites. Everything

⁶² Maurice Lee (ed.), *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain, 1603–1624, Jacobean Letters* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1972), 66.

⁶³ Quoted in Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 38. On the Somerset wedding see Alison V. Scott, *Selfish Gifts: The Politics of Exchange and English Courtly Literature 1580–1628* (Madison, WI: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), 159–87.

⁶⁴ Ben Jonson wrote *Hymenaei, or the Solemnities of Masque and Barriers* (1606), for the marriage of the Earl of Essex and Frances Howard, and *The Haddington Masque* (1608), for that of Viscount Haddington to Lady Elizabeth Ratcliffe: Herford and Simpson (eds.), *Ben Jonson*, vii, 203–64.

⁶⁵ Michael B. Young, *King James and the History of Homosexuality* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 47. Buckingham famously reciprocated in his Madrid letters with the labelling of James as 'dad' as well as 'gossip'.

⁶⁶ HMC, *Salisbury*, xvii, 564.

⁶⁷ The story of Harington under James is complicated by the former's imprisonment for debt when he stood surety for his uncle Thomas Markham, and also by the question raised by Scott-Warren of how far the works dedicated to Henry, or designed for him—the collected epigrams, the revision of the translation of the 6th book of the *Aeneid* and his supplement to Godwin's *A Catalogue of the Bishops of England* (1601)—were intended for the king's eyes: Jason Scott-Warren, *Sir John Harington and the Book as Gift* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 203–30.

had a price, and was determined by the interests of the patronage brokers. This alienated not only the excluded courtiers, but those who had to pay for the privileges they sought to defend. By the end of James's reign, for example, the East India Company was engaged in a debate about whether to continue their accustomed New Year's gifts to the powerful. Some, said their laconic note in 1626, had been of the opinion that it would do more good not to give at all.⁶⁸ In practice, though, this was not a serious option when clients, just as much as patrons, were invested in the management of competition through *douceurs*. Gifts must be given, concluded the Company minutes, in 1620, to those 'of whose countenance and favour the Company stand in need'.⁶⁹ This did not, however, prevent the East India men from complaining publicly about the demands of the king and Buckingham.⁷⁰

In this lethally competitive environment one relatively novel means of appealing to patrons became significant. The accumulation of commodities by the wealthy and powerful began to include serious art collections and art could provide the ideal gift, displaying the sophistication of both donor and recipient. The Earl of Salisbury was one of the first in this field, recognizing Prince Henry's enthusiasm for painting and donating a group to him in 1610. Salisbury's advisor was Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel, another giver to the prince and already acknowledged as his artistic mentor.⁷¹ A few years later Arundel had acquired such a reputation as a connoisseur of art that he was encouraged to engage in a gift-exchange with one of Europe's most knowledgeable collectors—Cosimo II de Medici. Cosimo asked for a Holbein 'because I have become passionately set upon having a work by this artist' and in return offered a picture by any Italian artist. Arundel gave his *Sir Richard Southwell* and in return seems to have received Adam Elsheimer's *The Finding of the True Cross*.⁷² This was a unique transaction, but already there were a group of men who were well informed on Continental art dealing eager to use this new resource to gratify the powerful. Sir Henry Wotton sent Carr a Netherlandish painting, expecting him to understand this northern style 'for your better delectation'.⁷³

This can best be observed through a case-study. When Dudley Carleton sought the office of Secretary of State his method of seeking patronage shows how significant the new material culture had become in the late Jacobean Court. Carleton used statuary as his bait, playing, as did his rival in the ambassadorial service Sir Henry

⁶⁸ CSP Colonial, *East Indies*, 1617—21, 491—2; 1622—4, 1; 1625—9, 289.

⁶⁹ CSP Colonial, *East Indies*, 1617—21, 329.

⁷⁰ CSP Colonial, *East Indies*, 1622—4, 205—6.

⁷¹ TNA SP14/15/87. David Howarth, *Lord Arundel and his Circle* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 29.

⁷² David Howarth, *Lord Arundel and his Circle*, 69—71. Howarth points out that this exchange probably gave Arundel a double pleasure, that of status in a transaction with a European ruler, and that of giving away the portrait of the persecutor of Sir Thomas More and of Arundel's ancestor the Earl of Surrey.

⁷³ A. R. Braunmuller, 'Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, as Collector and Patron', in Linda Levy Peck (ed.), *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 232.

Wotton, on Buckingham's desire to appear a connoisseur.⁷⁴ In 1624 Sir Henry presented Buckingham with 'a great many curious pictures' in his successful quest for the provostship of Eton College.⁷⁵ Carleton had wanted the provostship, but then transferred his attention to the secretaryship, and proposed to give a fine set of marbles for the favourite's patronage. We need here first to focus on the politics of patronage. The office of secretary was occupied by George Calvert, who would, it was reported, expect £6000 to cede it to a successor. Calvert resigned and the post went to Albertus Morton who, himself, produced the £3000 finally asked.⁷⁶ Buckingham's role in all of this is somewhat obscure, but his hostility to Calvert was well known and he seems to have promised Morton, a 'creature' of Wotton, his support.⁷⁷ Meanwhile the other Secretary of State, Sir Edward Conway, also recognized the effectiveness of art for the maintenance of the favourite's affection. In 1625 he asked Isaac Wake, Wotton's successor but one in the Venetian embassy, to purchase three or four pictures that 'may with credit bee presented to a noble friend and there find acceptance'.⁷⁸

The gift of statuary might therefore be seen as a straightforward down-payment for office; one that failed. But the mode of offering suggests a more complex process, still underpinned by the cultural force of obligation created by the gift. Carleton's nephew, also a Dudley Carleton, was told to approach Buckingham only if the situation was favourable, and the younger Dudley was duly cautious.⁷⁹ Once Calvert had resigned an elaborate dance of 'indirection' ensued. The Liège merchant who held the statues was said to be willing to sell at a reasonable price; sketches were shown to Buckingham and his artistic agent Balthasar Gerbier and the latter praised them. Then Dudley moved more explicitly to offer them as a gift, and, after some apparent hesitation, Buckingham accepted. The following day the favourite sent one of his servants to ask about recompense for this generous gift and Dudley described how he ensured that his lordship was discouraged from 'returning present for present', since there were many ways in which good could be done 'for his friends'.⁸⁰ The gift-exchange was left open and Buckingham obliged. Though the secretaryship was lost, and an initial attempt to make Carleton Vice-Chamberlain failed, the latter post came to him after James's death, its reversion

⁷⁴ J. H. Barcroft, 'Carleton and Buckingham: the Quest for Office', in Howard Stuart Reinmuth (ed.), *Early Stuart Studies: Essays in Honour of David Harris Willson* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1970), 122–36.

⁷⁵ *CSPD*, 1623–5, 201. Wotton also had to manoeuvre around a promise by Buckingham to give the post to Sir William Becher, eventually transferring to the latter his interest in the Six Clerks position in Chancery. The deal cost Wotton £2500: Peck, *Court Patronage*, 62–7.

⁷⁶ Calvert's conversion to Catholicism in 1624 made it inevitable that he would have to resign his post. John D. Krugler, 'Sir George Calvert's Resignation as Secretary of State and the Founding of Maryland', *Maryland Historical Magazine* 68 (1973), 239–54.

⁷⁷ When Calvert had gained the secretaryship in 1619 he assumed he owed the office to Villiers, and sent him a valuable jewel in thanks. It was returned, because the favourite insisted that he had no part in the promotion. John D. Krugler, 'George Calvert', *ODNB*.

⁷⁸ Quoted in Susan Bracken and Robert Hill, 'Sir Isaac Wake, Venice and Art Collecting in Early Stuart England', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 24: 2(2012), 185. Buckingham was definitely the patron of Conway, having secured the secretaryship for him in 1623.

⁷⁹ TNA, SP84/121, fo.116r.

⁸⁰ TNA, SP14/182, fo.4r.

probably paid for by Buckingham.⁸¹ So, the element of down-payment, or bribe, in expectation of office was visible in the gift, but could not be crudely expressed. The expression of friendship and loyalty was a necessary rhetorical strategy, and indeed was a substantive part of the exchange. As the author of this case-study concludes, the most evident feature of Carleton's quest for office was the inefficiency of rewarding loyalty by these cumbersome means.

CAROLINE CONNOISSEURSHIP

Buckingham's statues were presented in the aftermath of the Madrid debacle some years after the beginning of serious art collection by Prince Henry and Queen Anne on the one hand, and the Earl of Arundel and Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, on the other.⁸² Venetian ambassadors led by Sir Henry Wotton transformed themselves into artistic agents, collecting for favourites as well as the royal family, and other centres of the art world, especially the Low Countries and Madrid, were combed for desirable treasures. Only once Charles was securely on the throne, however, did connoisseurship move from being a useful adjunct to courtly life to assuming an important place in political culture. Then, to quote Sir Henry Wotton, art could aspire to become 'a piece of state' as it had been in Greece and Rome.⁸³

The story of royal and noble collecting from the mid-1620s to the outbreak of Civil War is in part that of the substitution of one form of material gift by another. While jewels and even plate remained as the stuff of giving in predictable circumstances—at New Year, on progress, and to and from ambassadors—the discerning and ambitious exploited the royal enthusiasm for painting and sculpture. The scrupulous catalogue of the royal collection, drawn up by Abraham Van der Doort at the end of the 1630s, enables us to see the impact of this change in unusual detail.⁸⁴ Van der Doort was consistent in recording the origins of painting and other artefacts that arrived in the royal collection, down to such modest offerings as the 'little carved Indian idol' that was his own present.⁸⁵ Purchase, exchange, and

⁸¹ Barcroft, 'Carleton and Buckingham', 133–4.

⁸² Timothy Wilks, 'Art Collecting at the English Court from the Death of Henry, Prince of Wales, to the Death of Anne of Denmark', *Journal of the History of Collections* 9: 1 (1997), 31–48; David Howarth, *Lord Arundel*. Braunmuller, 'Robert Carr', in Peck (ed.), *Jacobean Court*, 230–50.

⁸³ Henry Wotton, *Of the Elements of Architecture*, pt ii, in his *Reliquae Wottonianae* (London: T. Roycroft, 1672), 62.

⁸⁴ Oliver Millar (ed.), 'Abraham Van der Doort's Catalogue of the Collections of Charles I', *Walpole Society* 37 (1958–60). Van der Doort had originally been employed by Prince Henry to classify his coin and medal collection, and so his itemizing of this part of the royal collection is as thorough as that of the painting and sculpture. The catalogue, though impressively detailed, does not exhaust the range of pictures and other artefacts given to Charles. Some items are not properly noted as gifts, and others fell outside the range of palaces covered, or the time period in which Van der Doort worked. For example, Basil Feilding gave Charles a Bernardino Bennini on his return from Turin in 1639, in hope of a place in the Bedchamber: Paul Shakeshaft, "'To Much Bewiched with those Intysing Things': the Letters of James, Third Marquis of Hamilton and Basil, Viscount Feilding, Concerning Collecting in Venice 1635–1639", *The Burlington Magazine*, 128: 995 (February, 1986), 118.

⁸⁵ Shakeshaft, 'Letters of James, Third Marquis of Hamilton', 71.

inheritance explained more of the royal collection than gifts, but Charles received at least eighty paintings or sculptures from named individuals, the vast majority his own subjects.⁸⁶ Though many gave, a small group of donors recur: the Earl of Arundel, who had done so much to initiate the collecting of Italian art; Dudley Carleton, Viscount Dorchester; Robert Kerr, Earl of Ancram; James, third Marquis of Hamilton; Sir Arthur Hopton; and Sir Henry Wotton.

The one thing this group had in common was access to the European art markets, either as ambassadors or the immediate kin of such emissaries, so they both knew, and could exploit, the trade in art that had developed in Italy, and in the Low Countries. More interesting for our purposes is the degree to which they were part of the inner élite of Charles's Court: only Hopton and Wotton do not fully fit this model. If the range of donors is widened it includes more favoured courtiers and ministers: Lord Cottington; Philip, fourth Earl of Pembroke; Endymion Porter of the Privy Chamber; Sir Robert Killigrew (the queen's Vice-Chamberlain); Lord Danby and Theophilus, Earl of Suffolk.⁸⁷ However, many key political names are missing from the list of gift-givers: Archbishop Laud; Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford; Lord Treasurer Weston; Sir Francis Windebank; James Hay, Earl of Carlisle; and Henry Rich, Earl of Holland. Rich did engage in a couple of exchanges of art with the king; the rest at most gave medals or coins. Strafford, for example, sent modules of gold found in Ireland, and Weston gave a silver image of Cardinal Richelieu.⁸⁸ The latter group show that gifting art was by no means essential to retaining royal favour. It was, however, becoming an expectation that connoisseurship was an attribute of civilized courtly behaviour, and one that in principle attracted the king's interest.

The activities of James, Marquis of Hamilton, provide a particularly vivid insight into this new world.⁸⁹ He inherited his father's passion for collecting, and the series of paintings, largely acquired from Venice, that had belonged to him. He went with Charles to Madrid, but, after inheriting the title in 1625, seems to have had little opportunity for connoisseurship of his own until after his return from fighting with Gustavus Adolphus. Thereafter he had eight years at the Caroline Court with little official obligation before the Scottish crisis called him home. These years he devoted to collecting being, as he told his brother-in-law, Basil Feilding, 'much in looufe with pictures'.⁹⁰ That love was surely modulated by his awareness of the

⁸⁶ Van der Doort does not always name the donor, especially in the case of portraits of royalty. Foreign donors included Philip IV with his munificent gift of Titians in 1623 (though the Charles V with his hunting dog is not listed as a gift); the United Provinces (on two occasions); Rubens, who gave his own painting of *The Allegory of Peace*; and the city of Nuremberg, which sent two Durers: 'Collections of Charles I', 4, 19, 76.

⁸⁷ Several of this group had extensive ambassadorial experience—notably Cottington and Porter—but others—like Pembroke and Suffolk, must have depended on agents to develop their knowledge of foreign painting.

⁸⁸ 'Collections of Charles I', 130, 132.

⁸⁹ Gilbert Burnet, *The Memoirs of the Lives and Actions of James and Wm. Dukes of Hamilton* (London: R. Royston, 1677); Shakeshaft, 'Letters of Hamilton', 114–34. On Hamilton's activities see also Francis Haskell, *The King's Pictures: the Formation and Dispersal of the Collections of Charles I and his Courtiers* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 23–7.

⁹⁰ Francis Haskell, *The King's Pictures*, 115.

benefits collecting gave him, providing ease of access to his royal kinsman and persuading Charles of the need to continue his generosity. Even before Hamilton left Swedish service the king was reminding him about pictures which he had promised to look at in Munich: 'now in good earnest do not forget it'.⁹¹ Van der Doort records four pictures the marquis brought from Germany and gave to Charles: plus an Adam and Eve by Cranach which may or may not have come from these travels. In the following years Hamilton made spectacular purchases from Venice, especially through the agency of his brother-in-law, ending in 1638 with a collection of 600 paintings.⁹² He used his gains to furnish Wallingford House, previously owned by the Duke of Buckingham, whose role as favourite he clearly wished to emulate. He also saw his collection as a way of upstaging the Earl of Arundel: his hostility emerging very clearly through his correspondence with Feilding.⁹³

Hamilton could have given the German pictures to Charles, in competition with Arundel. The latter had returned from his embassy to the Emperor in 1636 with two Durers, and with gifts of his own for the king—a Christ in Gesthemane, and the portrait of a man with armour and a page. But the marquis was above all playing a complex game of engaging Charles's interest through his collection, while fending off royal attempts to take the best from him. In 1637 the king invested in Hamilton's quest for Venetian art, and a large group was purchased, arriving in 1638. Much dubious manoeuvring ensued: Charles insisted on having the best pictures for, the Earl of Morton told Hamilton, 'if you let him not have a goode bargain you shall pay for it to the full'.⁹⁴ On the other side there were attempts to keep the best away from the king, and in the difficult circumstances of the following year, these largely succeeded. We might therefore read Hamilton's gifts to Charles as a way of fending off his eager interest in this or earlier consignments. And the marquis also exemplifies another element in courtly connoisseurship: the willingness to exchange paintings and other artefacts. He and the king exchanged still lifes: a piece with grapes and fruit for one with food and wine.⁹⁵ More notably he took two Dutch altarpiece panels, given by the States-General in 1636, in exchange for two Cranachs.⁹⁶

Hamilton's ability to profit from his gifting was ultimately dependent on the king's attitude to art. Sir Henry Wotton, in his panegyric on Charles's reign, spoke of the 'most splendid' of royal 'entertainments', the love of picture and sculpture, with which he adorned his palaces, so that Italy 'may be seen by your magnificence to be translated into England'.⁹⁷ But it was not only a question of cultivating magnificence.

⁹¹ Burnet, *Memoirs*, 22.

⁹² Jerry Brotton, *The Sale of the Late King's Goods: Charles I and his Art Collection* (London: Pan, 2007), 183–4.

⁹³ Shakeshaft, 'Letters of Hamilton', 116–17. This seems to be a repeat performance of the antagonism between Arundel and Buckingham: Kevin Sharpe, 'The Earl of Arundel: His Circle and the Opposition to the Duke of Buckingham' in his (ed.): *Faction and Parliament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 209–44.

⁹⁴ Shakeshaft, 'Letters of Hamilton', 116.

⁹⁵ 'Collections of Charles I', 64.

⁹⁶ J. Bruyn and Oliver Millar, 'Notes on the Royal Collection—III: the "Dutch Gift"', *The Burlington Magazine* 104: 712 (July, 1962), 293.

⁹⁷ Henry Wotton, *A Panegyrick of King Charles* (London: Richard Marriott, 1649), 103–4.

Knowledgeable contemporaries saw the king as very much part of a coterie greedy to display their sophistication. When Sir Isaac Wake complained of 'some in England, who have taken upon themselves a monopolye of passing their verdict upon all things of this nature [paintings]', excluding others who 'cannot be admitted to the church', he did not aim explicitly at the king, but the allegation resonates.⁹⁸ Givers were often rather precisely aware of royal taste, and the way it determined the general popularity of an artist. Hamilton warned Feilding that he should only buy Veroneses if they were of the best quality, 'he being a master not verie much esteemed heer by the king and so consequently by folk eales'.⁹⁹ A royal innovation at Whitehall was the construction of a Cabinet Room in which precious paintings, medals, coins, and miniatures were displayed, affirming his membership of an exclusive club of princes who had *kunstkammers*.¹⁰⁰ Gifts were an important part of the way in which the cognoscenti sought to inform royal taste, as well as profiting from royal patronage, and Charles was presumably a gracious recipient. A few of the gifts hung in the most intimate parts of the Whitehall apartments: Lord Cottington's present from Spain of a Parmigianino of the Muses in the royal bedchamber; Rubens's own offering in one of the two Privy Chambers along with a Correggio from the Duke of Buckingham, the Titian *Venus Pardo* from Philip IV, and a variety of portraits donated by the Earl of Arundel, Sir James Palmer, and Sir Henry Wotton.¹⁰¹ There can have been few more obvious ways for a subject to follow Burghley's precept about the visibility of the gift as a constant reminder of the donor.

Yet gifts assumed a limited place within the structure of royal collecting: hence the king's willingness to gain what he wanted by exchanges with his courtiers, and his enthusiasm for purchase. Courtiers knew that they could please him just as much by finding and selling appropriate art as by donation.¹⁰² These royal habits had been formed before he came to the throne, nurtured by Buckingham, and given full rein in the 1630s. The Madrid experience, though it culminated in the great Titian offerings, was also a shopping trip for the prince and his favourite. Agents and diplomats were primed to buy Italian art in the mid-1620s, and then in 1628 came the 'audacious' acquisition of nearly 400 pictures and sculptures from the Gonzagas of Mantua, at a cost of over £18,000.¹⁰³ The Mantua purchase has attracted much attention partly because it was the largest major addition to the Crown collection, and because it represented significant expenditure in the depths of the fiscal crisis created by the wars against France and Spain. In general the distinction drawn by Jerry Brotton is pertinent: 'art was highly valued' in Charles's circle, it was not, however, very valuable, in that its normal costs were relatively modest against the general pattern of courtly display.¹⁰⁴ So the king was able, with some caution, to acquire his chosen objects.

⁹⁸ TNA, SP99/26, fo.168. ⁹⁹ Shakeshaft, 'Letters of Hamilton', 124.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas DaCosta Kaufman, 'Remarks on the Collections of Rudolph II: the *Kunstkammer* as a Form of Representatio', *Art Journal* 38:1 (1978), 22–8.

¹⁰¹ 'Collections of Charles I', 4–36.

¹⁰² Hamilton, in his correspondence with Feilding, shows that it was the ability to achieve a major Italian purchase for the King that engaged his honour: Shakeshaft, 'Letters of Hamilton', 124–5.

¹⁰³ Brotton, *Late King's Goods*, 107.

¹⁰⁴ Brotton, *Late King's Goods*, 12–13. A new Van Dyck cost approximately £50, and Charles had to limit his spending on Italian art in the 1630s, only providing £800 for the attempt by a consortium

Since he was obsessed with acquisition and was frankly indifferent to the methods by which he gained what he desired, he could be gratified by gifts; equally he would pay what he could afford (or more) to reach the necessary ends. At times there was small distinction between royal methods of acquisition. In 1625 Charles was 'given' Sir Henry Fanshawe's picture collection by his widow, the prize pieces being the *Portrait of a Woman* by Palma Vecchio, and three Holbeins. Chamberlain records the donation in very cynical tones:

The Lord Arundel hath played a friendly part with the lady Fanshawe and caused the king to send for all her pictures great and small: which may serve for a caveat that if you bring home any you esteem he may be the last that should see them, lest he reap a thanks a vostre despens.¹⁰⁵

Arundel may have been the agent, but Charles must have applied the leverage to take a collection that had been willed as heirloom by Sir Henry to his kin.¹⁰⁶ The spirit of the gift did not easily survive the acquisitive instincts of both king and peer.

Exchanges occupy a particularly interesting place in this passion for possession.¹⁰⁷ Van der Doort faithfully records a number of major swaps. Charles gained Titians, Leonardo's *St John*, a Raphael, an Andrea del Sarto, Bonifazio Veronese, Pordenone, Tintoretto, Palma Giovane, Bellini, Procaccini, and a few non-Italian pictures, including two of Mary Queen of Scots, and most remarkably the Wilton diptych.¹⁰⁸ Apart from underscoring the obvious point that Charles was a passionate devotee of Italian art, the exchanges are interesting for the return made. Some surrenders of precious things were made: to gain the Leonardo from France he had to sacrifice a *Virgin and Child* by Titian as well as Holbein's *Erasmus*. Several of the Italian Mannerists came from the Duke of Buckingham's collection, and his widow was rewarded with a number of Mantua pieces. One early exchange suggests that Charles could be pushed into valuable surrenders: the Earl of Pembroke got a small Raphael in return for a Bellini before 1625. When the king faced powerful collectors like Pembroke and Arundel he seems to have accepted transactions based on taste: in order to get the Raphael *St George* from Pembroke he proffered the great

to buy the Venetian collection of Bartolomeo della Nave: David Howarth, *Images of Rule: Art and Politics in the English Renaissance, 1485–1649* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 9–10; Charles Petrie (ed.), *The Letters, Speeches and Proclamations of King Charles I* (London: Cassell, 1935), 81. Smuts estimated that new painting and sculpture cost the king a little over £10,000 between 1625 and 1640. By way of comparison masques cost the Exchequer an average of just over £1400 each: R. Malcolm Smuts, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), 128–30.

¹⁰⁵ McClure, 'Letters of Chamberlain', ii, 621.

¹⁰⁶ Wilks, 'Art Collecting at the English Court', 35. Wilks suggests that Charles must have offered some recompense: the most obvious mark of favour was that the widow's eldest son, Sir Thomas, was made a knight of the Bath at Charles's coronation in 1626. Sybil Jack, 'Sir Thomas Fanshawe', *ODNB*.

¹⁰⁷ This is partly because such exchanges do not seem common between princely collectors and their courtiers: Ronald Lightboun, 'Charles I and the Tradition of European Princely Collecting', in Arthur MacGregor (ed.), *The Late King's Goods: Collections, Possessions and Patronage of Charles I in the Light of the Commonwealth Sales Inventories* (London: Alistair MacAlpine, 1989), 67.

¹⁰⁸ This represents a minimum number of exchanges, since Van der Doort only recorded those for the main collections he was cataloguing at Whitehall.

book of Holbein drawings, which was promptly passed to Arundel, a devotee of the German. Others were simply given portraits—this was the reward to Lady Jennings for the Wilton Diptych, and to Holland for a Bonifazio.¹⁰⁹

It is clear that the collecting frenzy of the late 1620s and 1630s altered the nature of exchange between the monarch and a section of his courtly élite. Charles was actively participant in the commodification of art and in its identification with his person. The king's reputation in other aspects of his courtly life is one of concern for order, distance, and the proper maintenance of hierarchy, usually, it is argued, in reaction to his father's behaviour.¹¹⁰ But in this one area he descended emphatically into the marketplace and treated his subjects, if not as equals, at least as men with whom there must be exchanges based on shared acquisitive instincts and shared understanding of goals. This is not only true of his greatest subjects who collected—Arundel, Pembroke, and Hamilton—but of second-rank figures like Endymion Porter, an agent for art but also participant in exchanges and gift-giving with the king. In part this is a continuation of the valorizing of friendship between monarch and favoured courtiers: friendship now articulated through visual intimacy (perhaps as a substitute for social intimacy?). There was, however, little attempt to represent this exchange in terms of generosity or disinterested sharing, and the value of the giver was easily lost in the pursuit of the object. Art was to be traded and possessed, admired for its aesthetic qualities and to display the acquisitive skills of a prince. This all seems curiously at odds with the vision of order, control, and distance that were the hallmarks of Charles's courtly policy.

BENEFITS FOR WHOM?

The accumulation of the royal and noble art collections of the early Stuart period depended as much on knowledgeable middlemen as on the interests of the recipients. These men are often well known because of their international role and the correspondence that accompanied it. William Petty and Thomas Roe dealt for Arundel, William Trumbull and John Packer for Carr, and Peter Fitton for Hamilton via Feilding. The individuals are unusual in their geographical spread and skills, but essentially they were performing service for their patrons. Like any servants they expected reward, and, like many early modern agents, they received it only intermittently. It was therefore both tempting, and necessary, to maximize the profit that derived from their situations in all possible ways. This can be generalized to encompass the whole structure of exchange within the early modern courtly system. Reward for services rendered, though partially expressed in formal annuities,

¹⁰⁹ Even the portraits seem to have reflected the value of the exchange, and perhaps the cultural standing of the donor. Pembroke twice got portraits, but they were Van Dycks, while those to others were usually unspecified 'pictures'.

¹¹⁰ Kevin Sharpe directly associates the king's taste in art to his concern for order. This works well in looking at his interest in Van Dyck and portraiture, but a rather different vision is provided by his competitive thirst for collecting. Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 180–2.

pensions, and fees, were also extracted in gratuities and presents. The boundaries between these various benefits were often permeable, and open to manipulation if not outright abuse. In many ways this structure was unchanging in the two centuries considered here. However, early Stuart behaviour at the very least magnified the competitive pressures within the Court system, and exposed the faultlines between the rhetoric of generosity and reward and naked calculus of gain.

No royal movement or gesture was possible without the participants satisfying the household below stairs, or specialists like the heralds. The heralds always received largesse at New Year: approximately £17 under Henry VIII and with little variation thereafter.¹¹¹ The officers of State were also expected to provide rewards for the household below stairs each New Year. Sir Thomas Egerton's accounts for 1612 record that he paid £34 5s 10d to officers of the royal household: Archbishop Laud gave £30 17s 6d in 1639–40.¹¹² These were not great sums, but their status surely more resembled fees than gratuitous rewards. The most common offerings on progress were the gifts to musicians, heralds, footmen, and the like who formed a crucial part of the royal train. Often towns had to pay almost as much cumulatively to these servants as the sums they produced for the royal gift. At Elizabeth's first visit to Faversham in 1573 the cup cost the town £27 2s, and the rest of the charges, overwhelmingly rewards, added another £17. At Canterbury on the same visit the queen was given £30, the Court of Service just under £20.¹¹³ None of this included the cost of hospitality, but as a good indicator Lord North, receiving Elizabeth for three days in 1578 spent £120 on a jewel for the queen, £89 on rewards to servants, with £762 as overall cost.¹¹⁴ The travelling household could also claim as perquisites some of the remnants of the ceremonial exchanges. The footmen asserted entitlement to any canopy used to display the estate of the royal visitor—an arrangement that at Canterbury in 1520 after the visit of the Emperor Charles V led to an unseemly argument before the city retrieved it 'by grete meane and entreaty'.¹¹⁵ At Henry VIII's entry to Lincoln in 1541 the footmen again took the canopy, while the Master of the Horse carried off the carpets and stools as his reward.¹¹⁶ By James's reign it seems that even the gilt cups given by many towns had become the perquisites of the footmen, leaving only the most valuable in royal hands.¹¹⁷

Most of this must surely have been regarded as the normal, if unattractive, behaviour of the monarch's domestic servants. Rewards, gratuities, and the right to perquisites were all expectations that had to be discharged. And what might have started as an informal reward or gratuity for specific services could over time become a standardized fee.¹¹⁸ When Thomas Egerton's son John was about to

¹¹¹ BL, Harl. MS. 369, fos. 96^r and ^v.

¹¹² HHL, Ellesmere MS. no. 232. *CSPD*, 1639–40, 291.

¹¹³ James M. Gibson (ed.), *REED Kent: Diocese of Canterbury*, 3 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), ii, 550–1; i, 203.

¹¹⁴ Nichols's, *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth*, ii, 837–9.

¹¹⁵ *REED Kent*, i, 127–8.

¹¹⁶ BL, Add MS. 6113.

¹¹⁷ Cooper, *Annals of Cambridge*, iii, 74.

¹¹⁸ Gerald E. Aylmer, *The King's Servants; the Civil Service of Charles I, 1625–42* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), 176–7.

acquire the earldom of Bridgewater in 1617 he sent his agent a box with the necessary bill for the king to sign and fifty pieces of gold, to be spent in charges and gratuities.¹¹⁹ The gratuities were not fully fixed as fees: the agent was told he could have more if need be. A few years later Richard Boyle, Earl of Cork, was seeking knighthood for his eldest son, and paid the Lord Deputy of Ireland's officers £37 10s for their fees, but added a gratuity to bring the sum to £40. The flexibility of reward in these cases is in contrast to the highly formal fee structure that seems to have grown up around the New Year's exchange. The much-quoted instructions from the Earl of Huntingdon to his agent show an elaborate process of 'liberating' the royal gift after paying fees in the Treasurer of the Chamber's office and the Jewel House.¹²⁰ By the 1630s we have other evidence of the pursuit of fees as an integral part of the gift ceremony.¹²¹ Lord North failed to deliver his New Year's gift in 1637, and it was the officers of the Jewel House who pursued it. His nephew Dudley North agreed to deliver it, but dismissed the mistake as occurring in 'a matter so small and ordinarily used'.¹²² It was left to Pepys after the Restoration to make doubts about the New Year's gift more explicit when he fetched the Earl of Sandwich's gift: 'strange it was for me to see what a company of small Fees I was called upon by a great many to pay there, which, I perceive, is the manner that courtiers do get their estates'.¹²³

The most public aspects of gifting—on progress and to ambassadors—produced other tensions under the early Stuarts. The squabbles between the Jewel House and the Master of Ceremonies about how the presentation of gifts to ambassadors was managed were a significant source of embarrassment. Sir Lewis Lewkenor, James's Master of Ceremonies, and Henry Mildmay of the Jewel House clashed about who had the right to present departure gifts to ambassadors, involving several of the great men of Court in their dispute about a jewel for the French ambassador in 1617.¹²⁴ And even when there was no issue of competition between officers, individuals were likely to find their gifts significantly reduced in value by the ministrations of the Jewel House. The most famous case is that of the Polish ambassador who attended Charles's Scottish coronation. The City of Edinburgh gave him plate worth £800, but at its delivery it was worth only £600, and the Master then asked another £40 in gratuity.¹²⁵ The case of the claims to progress gifts as perquisites established by the Master of the Horse discussed above may not have

¹¹⁹ HHL, Ellesmere MS. no. 6454a.

¹²⁰ Nichols, *Progresses of James I*, i, 471. A version of this survives among the Carte MSS. in the Bodleian, dated to 1636, perhaps a copy, since it still refers to Sir William Veale as Treasurer of the Chamber: Bodl., Carte MS. 78, fo. 343^r.

¹²¹ 'A baron's new year gift to the King', dates from sometime in the 1630s and again itemizes fees and is highly formulaic, though interestingly the baron was allowed a bill of impost for four tuns of wine as part of the exchange: Bodl., Carte MS. 78, fo. 560^r.

¹²² Bodl., North MS. C. 4, fo. 24^r.

¹²³ *The Diary of Samuel Pepys: a New and Complete Transcription*, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews, 11 vols. (London: G. Bell, 1970–83), ii, 5.

¹²⁴ John Finet, *Finetti Philoxenis: Som Choice Observations of Sir John Finett, Knight, and Master of Ceremonies to the Two Last Kings* (London: H. Twyford and G. Bedell, 1656), 191–4.

¹²⁵ Albert J. Loomie (ed.), *Ceremonies of Charles I: the Note Books of John Finet 1628–1641* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1987), 38. The post-Restoration complaint came from the Master of the Jewel House, Sir Gilbert Talbot, alleging that the Master of Ceremonies now carried the departure

been as embarrassing for the regime. Yet the insensitivity displayed by the public appropriation of carefully chosen urban plate must surely have created resentment in the donors and encouraged questioning of courtly behaviour.

CAROLINE EXCHANGE AND DISPLAY

Charles I's Court was evidently different from that of his father, nowhere more so than in its aesthetic expression of order and harmony. The culture of gifting, which offered rich possibilities for a specific focus on art, was a part of this change. Meanwhile the general functions of the gift continued much as they had done in previous reigns. The two surviving New Year's gift rolls for 1627 and 1638 follow established tradition.¹²⁶ The earls, bishops, and barons produce fixed sums of gold, and are rewarded with silver gilt. The sum of £1921 was paid into the privy purse in 1627, £2266 in 1638, the change indicating more participants, including several new creations. There are occasional hints of more personal gestures, like the satin night bag with gold and silver embroidery offered by Lady Coningsby in 1627: generally the rolls speak of routine, rather than much explicit royal engagement. Only about three-quarters of the nobility made gifts to the king, and there was a complete absence of Irish or Scottish peers. In 1638 only four knights gave presents, and they were men in direct royal service.¹²⁷ Only the continuing distinctiveness of the gifts provided by the household of service suggest that there was any personal engagement in the process. The most that can be said is that Charles preserved the form of the ceremony as he had inherited it.

The king's own preferences in gifting, over and beyond his artistic passions, can occasionally be glimpsed in the jewels given to Henrietta Maria, or in the horses that continued to be provided by his nobility as well as foreign princes. Meanwhile the courtly gifts of clients and dependents seem to have flowed much as before. Government lawyers received gilt cups and ewers at the New Year; privy counselors were gifted gold and gilt; Court weddings produced a shower of goods; ministers received inducements from foreign powers. The Earl of Cork, in England in 1629, gave sixteen counsellors New Year's gifts, and passed on several presents that had been given to him, including a 'fair purse' of gold from the Earl of Manchester, that was sent to the Lord Chief Justice of Common Pleas.¹²⁸ At New Year, 1632, Secretary of State Coke was given plate by the Merchant Adventurers, the Turkey

presents, and therefore had two gifts from the ambassadors—one in right of his office and one for the process of carriage: *CSPD 1667–1668*, 135.

¹²⁶ BL, Egerton MS. 2816; Harl. Roll T2.

¹²⁷ Richard Cust, *Charles I and the Aristocracy 1625–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 83. Three of the four were key officials—Coke and Windebank, the secretaries, and Vane, the Comptroller of the Household.

¹²⁸ Alexander Balloch Grosart (ed.), *The Lismore Papers: 1st ser., The Autobiographical Notes, Remembrances and Diaries of Richard Boyle, First and Great Earl of Cork*, 5 vols. (London: private printing, 1886), ii, 293–4.

Company, the Muscovy Company, by individuals such as the Earl of Bridgewater, Lord Raneleigh, and the Countess of Devonshire, and of course the usual cup from his Master.¹²⁹ The East India Company had overcome any earlier reservations about the value of giving at the season, and in the 1630s gave presents to its accustomed politicians without overt debate.¹³⁰ Weddings were less ostentatiously extravagant than under James, but at the marriage of the Duchess of Lennox's daughter in 1632 'many great presents were made' and the Earl of Arundel gave plate said to be worth £3000.¹³¹

Ostentation in giving certainly did not die with the Duke of Buckingham. In 1639, for example, the Earl of Holland gave Lady Carlisle a diamond bracelet costing £1500, which became a predictable talk of the Court.¹³² The Duchess of Richmond (aka Frances Howard), acting as proxy for the French Queen Mother as godmother at the christening of Prince Charles gave the baby a ring worth £4000 or £5000, Henrietta Maria a jewel worth £1000, and the nurses and other servants nearly another £5000 in plate and jewels. It was, as the Master of Ceremonies John Finet commented, 'a more than ordinary bounty'.¹³³ Power still needed to be confirmed by the willingness to give and not to count the cost. However, many of Charles's Court did need to count cost, and the management of generosity took various forms including careful displays of connoisseurship, and resort to the standard rhetoric of tokens and trifles in giving. A favoured device both within and without the Court was the cultivation of luxury in food and gardening. When Lord Cottington visited Hatfield in 1636 he produced nine melons 'and six more at night, of brave kinds'.¹³⁴ Sir Robert Kerr, Keeper of the Privy Purse, sent Secretary Dorchester grapes and 'peaches conscionable good'.¹³⁵ These were examples of gifts maintaining social networks: such gestures implied the wealth that sustained a courtly life without great expenditure. Petitioners and patronage beneficiaries also continued to feel obliged to offer gifts to seal deals and confirm relationships, even if in practice they were paying for their rewards.

Charles's own financial embarrassments prevented him from showering largesse as his father had done. In the dark days of 1629 the Venetian ambassador observed that courtiers such as Carlisle and Holland could no longer depend on royal opulence because 'at present his Majesty can hardly find the means to provide for

¹²⁹ Coke had an annual inventory taken of his plate at New Year: it is not clear how much was given, or by whom, but it seems likely that he received more than was formally listed in his accounts: Coke Papers, ser. ii: BL, Add. MS. 69877, fos. 35^r and ^v, 38^r, 52^r and ^v.

¹³⁰ *CSP Colonial, East Indies, 1630–34*, 98, 339. Thomas Windebank was still a recipient in 1640: TNA, SP16/458/fo.127^r.

¹³¹ Henry Herbert to Lord Scudamore, 23rd June, 1632: TNA C115/107. I owe this reference to Clive Holmes. When the Duke of Lennox married Lady Mary Villiers, Buckingham's daughter, in 1637, the Duchess of Richmond gave them great gifts—£5000 for the bridegroom and, a great necklace of pearls and other jewellery for the bride, but these were the only gifts the newsletter writer had been able to discover: Knowler, *Earl of Strafford's Letters*, ii, 114.

¹³² Daniel Parsons et al. (eds.), *The Diary of Sir Henry Slingsby of Scriven, Bart* (London: Longman et al., 1836) 32, 51.

¹³³ Loomie, *Ceremonies of Charles I*, 90.

¹³⁴ George Garrard to Viscount Conway, 26th July, 1636: *CSPD 1636–37*, 75.

¹³⁵ *CSPD 1631–33*, 164.

the needs of himself and the queen'.¹³⁶ Charles's attitude to his possessions therefore perforce became highly pragmatic: in the 1620s he permitted Buckingham to pawn many of the Crown jewels to fund the war effort, and in 1633, faced with the need to sparkle at his Scottish coronation, he seized back from the Earl of Somerset the jewels that had been given by James.¹³⁷ The pressures of managing limited resources grated against a desire to be gracious in giving and receiving. There are glimpses of that more gracious public face of monarchy in the king's willingness to give tapestries to favoured ambassadors, for the 'especiall regard' in which he held them.¹³⁸ Van der Doort describes how Charles had delivered 'with his own hands' a little statue of Bacchus's feast to Sir James Palmer, to copy for the tapestry makers at Mortlake.¹³⁹ The king also displayed a courteous interest in the receipt of gifts. Henry Murray handed him a silver medal with images and Greek lettering 'in the little roome at the watersyde' at Greenwich.¹⁴⁰ Richard Delamain, his favoured mathematician, described to the Earl of Bridgewater how he had presented a tract on artillery in the room next to the Chapel Royal. Charles took it, liked the subject and read it on his way to chapel, then passed it to one of the nobles present.¹⁴¹ Civility and decorum were displayed on these occasions with skilful royal expressions of gratitude in such small matters.

The contract between the king and his subjects had suffered serious damage in the 1620s from parliamentary conflict and Buckingham's deep unpopularity. Its repair could perhaps have been facilitated by the use of more elaborate gestures of gift-exchange, subjects expressing loyalty and receiving gracious royal thanks. Both Charles's personality and the urgent financial needs of the Crown during the personal rule made such transactions unlikely. Magnificence was still a necessity for a monarchical regime, and Charles thought it necessary to invest in the masque and in jewels for his family as well as art. Gifts from interest groups provided some limited contribution to Treasurer Weston's campaign to re-establish royal solvency, and were bluntly encouraged. The custom farmers, enjoying buoyant profits, tolerated a rise in the rents and also gave their regular New Year's gift of £1500.¹⁴² In 1635 they excited comment from the newsletter writers by adding a further £5000 and a diamond worth £5000 to their annual present.¹⁴³ This is surely a move prompted by governmental request. In the previous year, when the City of London intended to give Henrietta Maria a purse of £2000 in gold at the masque entertainment in Merchant Taylors' Hall, they were told bluntly by the Lord Chamberlain that this was an unworthy gift. Two days later a diamond valued at £4000 was substituted and accepted.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁶ *CSP Ven*, 1629–32, 205.

¹³⁷ Attempts to retrieve the royal jewels occupied much time and energy in the later 1630s: *CSPD*, 1637–8, 227.

¹³⁸ Loomie, *Ceremonies of Charles I*, 86, 100–1, 303 (Quote at 303).

¹³⁹ Millar, 'Collections of Charles I', 70.

¹⁴⁰ Millar, 'Collections of Charles I', 132.

¹⁴¹ HHL, Ellesmere MS. no. 6521.

¹⁴³ Knowler, *Letters of Strafforde*, i, 359.

¹⁴⁴ Knowler, *Letters of Strafforde*, i, 217. The cost of the masque for the City was £1287: LMA, COL/SJ/27/120.

¹⁴² Knowler, *Letters of Strafforde*, i, 359.

That masque, the 'Triumph of Peace', was performed by the Inns of Court first at Court and then, at royal request, in the City at Merchant Taylors' Hall. In the case of the City this grand entertainment was organized 'at command', at great logistical trouble and cost, including the enhanced cost of the gift. It was ordered at a moment when the City was vigorously challenging the Westminster soap-boiler monopoly and the Lord Mayor was deeply unpopular with the government. While the courtesies were observed, the Corporation, as we can see, had no control over what was given, and nor was it able to retain much control over the presentation of the masque.¹⁴⁵ The significance of these pressures on the City can be seen by contrasting Charles's actions with those of James. The latter's visit to the Merchant Taylors was not in any sense an exchange of equals. But the display of graciousness, the allowance of a performance planned by the Company, and the admission of Prince Henry to the fellowship, all maintained the illusion of mutuality and spontaneity. Charles commanded performance and his officer demanded on behalf of his master. Here was no high road to civil war, but nevertheless a loss of the symbolic capital which helped to maintain the image of cooperation between a monarch and his important subjects.

The gift strategy of Elizabeth I, like much of her political choices, was largely directed to domestic ends: she would be wooed to ensure her proper control of the realm. James inverted this process, and himself became the wooer of his new subjects, until, disappointed, he handed much of the control to his own favourites. Charles reasserted control, but at the cost of turning more explicitly inward to manage the culture of the Court. None of the monarchs had an absolute control over what was given or received, or how gift strategies were employed within the Court. Even when, as in James's early years in England, royal largesse was the initiation of the gift-cycle, the expectation of reward burdened the Crown with powerful obligations. Great subjects responded to changes in monarchical attitudes, but in seeking to satisfy their own clients they in turn had to allow considerable initiative to the donors of gifts.¹⁴⁶ The system in principle maintained relations of hierarchy and deference, imbuing them with something of the intimacy that was a

¹⁴⁵ Martin Butler, 'Politics and the Masque: the Triumph of Peace', *Seventeenth Century*, 2 (1987), 117–41; Brent Whitted, 'Street Politics: Charles I and the Inns of Court's "Triumph of Peace"', *Seventeenth Century*, 24: 1 (2009), 1–25. Kevin Sharpe's interpretation of the same occasions is markedly different, placing emphasis on the royal belief that they helped to construct accord between Charles and Londoners: Kevin Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment: The Politics of Literature in the England of Charles I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 215–22. The City was also placed by the circumstances in competition with the Inns. The 'Triumph of Peace' served the interests of the Inns far better than the City. Initiative lay in the lawyers' hands and Shirley devised them a pageant that was replete with extravagant expressions of loyalty while also giving free play to their interests by emphasizing the authority of the common law: Lawrence Venuti, 'The Politics of Allusion: the Gentry and Shirley's *The Triumph of Peace*', *English Literary Renaissance* 16 (1986), 182–205.

¹⁴⁶ The Earl of Newcastle, for example, accommodated himself to the preferences of his charge, Prince Charles, by giving him some statues on one occasion, but presumably much preferred the gift of horses, on who which he was expert. He condemned 'profuseness' in gifts, especially the acquisition of unnecessary things like pictures and jewels: Henry Ellis (ed.), *Original Letters Illustrative of English History*, ser. 1, 3 vols. (London: Harding et al., 1824), iii, 287; Newcastle, *Advice*, 49.

part of the gift relationship. In practice it was all too easily dislocated by failures of resource or personality, or by the other conflicting interests of Crown and subjects.

Personal monarchs were in a different position when they looked beyond the realm and addressed fellow rulers. Here the gift played a significant role in the growth of diplomatic relations in a Europe which, though regularly at war in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was nevertheless experiencing growing integration in the management of politics. Henry VIII, James I, and Charles I all looked outwards for much of the affirmation of their monarchical role, and drew on the arts of diplomacy to achieve the acknowledgment of their peers. Monarchs could treat one another as notionally equal, and as independent parties to exchanges which could never be conducted in the same way between ruler and subject. Their sovereign exchanges are therefore an important alternative way of gaining insight into the exercise of influence through gifts.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ The separation of domestic and international politics is, of course, somewhat artificial in a courtly context. Subjects represented monarchs, and other monarchs sometimes reached far into the English Court with gifts and promises. However, the distinct contexts for gift-giving, and the different attitude of monarchs themselves, merit separate treatment.

6

Sovereign Gifts: The Crown and Diplomatic Exchange

THE GIFTS OF PRINCES

In 1396, Richard II travelled to France to marry Isabel, daughter of Charles VI. The rulers met between Ardres and Guyene on the borders of the Calais Pale, and, before the ceremony, held tournaments and feasts in their tents. The chronicler Fabyan, following Froissart, dwelled particularly lovingly upon the gift-exchanges between both the princes and their followers:

And first king Richard gave unto the Frenche kyng, an hanap or basyn of golde with an ewer to the same. Than againwarde the Frenche king gave unto him iii standing cuppes of golde, with covers garnished with perle and stone, and a shippe of golde set upon a bere rychely garnysshed with perle and stone.¹

Charles gave Richard gold flagons and valuable pictures on gold: Richard responded with a great gold collar, set with precious stones, which the French king then wore at the meetings. The latter then responded with a huge gold spice plate. The value of each offering was carefully noted: the flagons and pictures at 1500 marks, the collar at 5000 marks and so on. Competitive exchanges continued throughout the celebrations, at the end of which Isabel was presented to Richard by her father, and conveyed to Calais to be married. The valuations recorded are incomplete, but the importance of the relationship between cost and reputation is indicated by the final comment that King Richard gave the Duke of Orleans a gift worth 1000 marks, but the duke outbid him and offered 3000 marks.

Ostentatious gifting to fellow rulers has a history reaching far back into the classical past.² Gifts could signal hegemony or subordination in an international

¹ *Fabyans Cronycle Newly Printed, with the Cronycle, Actes, and Dedes Done in the Tyme of the Reygne of the Moste Excellent Prynce Kyng Henry the VII* (London: William Rastell, 1533), fo.158r. The French king's gifts to Richard included two 'tablets' or pictures with images of the Trinity and St. George, but sadly no mention of the Wilton Diptych, which was probably also produced to celebrate this alliance.

² Professor Anthony Cutler's 2012 Slade Lectures in the University of Oxford, 'The Empire of Things: Gifts and Gift Exchange in Byzantium, Early Islam and Beyond', offered valuable evidence of how important such exchanges in the early medieval period. See also his 'Significant Gifts: Patterns of Exchange in Late Antique, Byzantine and Early Islamic Diplomacy', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38: 1 (2008), 79–101.

situation as they did in domestic exchange. When arrangements for the mission to Turkey were discussed in Elizabethan England one of the worries expressed was whether any present could be given to 'the Grand Signor', who 'takethe all presentes of Chrystian prynces, to be as tributes: And for suche are they regystred in his Recordes'.³ This simply highlights a general theme reiterated in this book: that the meaning of gifts is dependent upon context and upon the understanding of the agents engaged in exchange. But in early modern Europe princes and states normally used gifts, as they used other elements in diplomacy, to emphasize the autonomous control that they exercised in their own dominions, and to claim equality of status with fellow rulers. If a ruler accepted gifts or pensions without equal return it questioned, at the very least, his or her capacity to act autonomously. The most obvious case in the British Isles is that of the pension paid by Elizabeth to James VI of Scotland from 1584 to the Union of the Crowns. James sought to maintain his freedom of action by various means, including flirtations with the Spanish as alternative pension payers, but the exchange was only justified by both sides because of English needs for a Protestant succession.⁴ Material gifts were given for the less tangible assurance of political identity. A similar transactional assumption lies behind papal gifts of golden roses, swords, and caps, to princes who had served, or might be persuaded to serve, the interests of Rome.⁵

However, the principal focus here is upon the role that gifts played in the expression of equivalence of power. When alliance was sought—through marriage, treaties, or both—gifts had to flow generously. When more routine communication was the norm presents, either conveyed directly to other princes, or offered to their ambassadors, served as useful reminders of the proper standing of the donor and of his or her ability freely to participate in honourable exchange.⁶ This essential

³ BL, Lans. MS. 112, fo. 109r: transcribed in Susan A. Skilliter, *William Harborne and the Trade with Turkey 1578-1582: A Documentary Study of the First Anglo-Ottoman Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 191-2. The observation, probably a record of a Privy Council discussion, continues 'And the greater value that the presente ys made, the greater dutye and subiection he takethe hold of therebye'. This remained a problem for European powers through into the eighteenth century, with North African as well as Ottoman diplomacy: Christian Windler, 'Tributes and Presents in Franco-Tunisian Diplomacy', *Journal of Early Modern History* 4: 2 (2001), 169-99.

⁴ Julian Goodare, 'James VI's English Subsidy', in Julian Goodare and Michael Lynch (eds.), *The Reign of James VI* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2008), 110-25. See also Felicity Heal, 'Royal Gifts and Gift-Exchange in Sixteenth-Century Anglo-Scottish Politics', in Steven Boardman and Julian Goodare (eds.), *Kings, Lords and Men in Scotland and Britain: Essays in Honour of Jenny Wormald* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 283-300. Concepción Sáenz-Cambra, 'James VI's *Ius Sum Conservare*: his Intrigues with Spain, 1580-1603', *International Review of Scottish Studies* 30 (2005), 86-107.

⁵ Julius II and Clement VII sent Golden Roses to Henry VIII; Leo X gave the Holy Sword and Cap of Maintenance after Henry's capture of Tournai: Margaret Mitchell, 'Works of Art from Rome for Henry VIII. A Study of Anglo-Papal Relations as reflected in Papal Gifts to the English King', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 34 (1971), 178-203; Charles Burns, 'Papal Gifts to the Scottish Monarchs: The Golden Rose and the Blessed Sword', *Innes Review* 20: 1 (1969), 150-94.

⁶ The literature on diplomacy has been slow to acknowledge the importance of ceremonial actions and gestures as substantive manifestations of political engagement, and even slower to foreground gift-exchange, but there are now important contributions to such a study. Generally see, William Roosen, 'Early Modern Diplomatic Ceremonial: A Systems Approach', *Journal of Modern History* 52 (1980), 452-76; Timothy Hampton, *Fictions of Embassy: Literature and Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009); and Daniela Frigo, 'Prudence and Experience:

pattern of behaviour in interstate relations alters relatively little in the two centuries of this study. It might, in the most generic sense, be described as a necessary part of *ancien régime* diplomacy, to be considered thematically while recognizing variations of time and circumstance.

WHEN MONARCHS MET

Most diplomatic engagement between states did not involve the meeting of sovereigns, and for the English, in particular, geography and political circumstance kept their rulers at arms' length from their peers in this period. Physical isolation from the Continent provided the perfect justification for a reluctance to deal directly with other rulers, especially after the loss of Calais in 1558 gave England no foothold on the European mainland from which to present royal power. If we except Charles II's travels in exile we are left with little more than a handful of encounters, most of them from Henry VIII's reign. He met with the Emperor Maximilian before the Battle of the Spurs and after their victory at Tournai, with Francis I at the Field of Cloth of Gold in 1520, and again at Calais in 1532, and twice with the Emperor Charles V at Calais and in England. To these we must of course add Mary I's Habsburg marriage; and James I's entertainment of his Danish brother-in-law. We should probably also include Prince Charles's Madrid escapade in 1623, since this was eventually lent most of the legitimacy of a sovereign visit. The difficulties of such occasions are implicit in the two meetings that did not take place: James V failed to visit Henry VIII at York in 1541, and Elizabeth constantly deferred meeting with Mary, Queen of Scots. Like a modern summit there was little point in such encounters unless there was some reasonably clear political objective, and it was possible to ensure a parity of esteem. Unlike its modern counterpart the affirmation of honour through ceremonial could be the heart of the matter.

It must be said that there is no absolute consistency in the role that gifts played at these very different encounters. Though the Field of Cloth of Gold might be expected to have produced competitive giving, as it did competitive display and ritualized combat, it seems that honour was largely satisfied by other means. During advance planning, Henry's agents suggested that hawks, horses, and hounds, with their accoutrements would be provided as gifts, but no more is heard of them.⁷ Edward Hall's record of the meetings ends with a comment on gifts: on departure Henry gave Francis a 'collor of jewells of precious stone' and the French king reciprocated with a bracelet of precious stones 'riche jewels and fayre'. But for the chronicler these appear as little more than an afterthought after his sustained immersion in every visual

Ambassadors and Political Culture in Early Modern Italy', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38 (2008), 15–34. Specifically on gifts: Diana Carrió-Invernizzi, 'Gift and Diplomacy in Seventeenth-Century Spanish Italy', *Historical Journal* 51 (2008), 881–99; Suzanne B. Butters, 'The Uses and Abuses of Gifts in the World of Ferdinando de' Medici (1549–1609)', *I Tatti Studies: Essays in the Renaissance*, 11 (2007), 243–354; and Tracey Sowerby, '"A Memorial and a Pledge of Faith": Portraiture and Early Modern Diplomatic Culture', *EHR* 129 (2014), 296–331.

⁷ *LP*, III: i, 704.

aspect of the monarchical displays.⁸ Wolsey's retrospective allusion to the encounter which refers generally to magnificence, rather than to any form of gift-giving, probably reflects the realities of the occasion effectively.⁹ The successful opportunities for Henry to articulate alliance directly with the Habsburgs, in 1514 and 1520, were rather contrasting opportunities for display. The Emperor Maximilian, his Regent Margaret of Austria, and the young Prince Charles met Henry to celebrate victory in the first French war at Tournai, and, as befitted a young king in quest of status, Hall says that Henry gave 'many great giftes'.¹⁰ We know that they included gold plate covered with the badges of the Tudors.¹¹ It may be on this occasion that Maximilian gave Henry a set of jousting armour earlier commissioned from Conrad Seusenhofer, the best armourer in Europe.¹² Charles V's brief visit to England in 1520, followed by his meeting with Henry at Calais after the Field of Cloth of Gold, was marked by none of the ostentation of these French encounters: indeed the chroniclers make no mention of gifts, though Wolsey retrospectively puffed both his role in the welcome and the gifts and presents given to him 'to our Prince's honor and the realms'.¹³ In 1532, Francis gave Anne Boleyn a diamond alleged to be worth 15,000–16,000 crowns, when making public acknowledgement of her at the Calais meeting. He and Henry exchanged horses. In all these Henrician meetings, giving was in various ways woven into the wider pattern of competitive monarchical display: a necessary, but certainly not sufficient part of identifying the king as a truly European monarch.¹⁴

As for the Spanish match, the circumstances of marriage alliance required gifting initiative to lie in the hands of the bridegroom, and the magnificence of the Habsburg jewels displayed by Mary are a key indication of the prime direction of giving. Largesse flowed particularly from Charles V who was overwhelmingly eager to secure the alliance.¹⁵ Among the royal gifts that alliance brought to England was his offering of twelve tapestries of his victories against the Turks 'so excellentlye wroughte', says John Elder in his description of the marriage, 'as Apelles were not able (if he were alive) to mende any parcel with his pensell'¹⁶ He also gave a 'table diamond', later singled out

⁸ Edward Hall, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancastre and Yorke: The Triumphant Reign of Henry the VIII* (London: Richard Grafton, 1550), fos. 77^v–84^r, quote at fos. 83^v–84^r.

⁹ From Wolsey's 1529 defence of his proceedings: *LP*, IV: iii, 5750.

¹⁰ Hall, *The Union*, fo. 45^v.

¹¹ Philippa Glanville, 'Cardinal Wolsey and the Goldsmiths', in Steven J. Gunn and Philip G. Lindley (eds.), *Cardinal Wolsey: Church, State and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 139.

¹² Graeme Rimer, Thom Richardson and J. P. D. Cooper (eds.), *Henry VIII: Arms and the Man* (Leeds: Royal Armoury, 2009), 163. The armour was commissioned in 1512 to celebrate the alliance with Henry, but the circumstances of its delivery are not wholly clear. It is thought that Margaret of Austria's tapestry series based on Christine de Pisan's *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames* were a gift from the city of Tournai at the same time: Dagmar Eichberger, 'The Culture of Gifts: a Courtly Phenomenon from a Female Perspective', in Dagmar Eichberger and Yvonne Bleyerveld (eds.), *Women of Distinction: Margaret of York; Margaret of Austria* (Louvain: Brepols, 2005), 288.

¹³ *LP*, IV: iii, 5750.

¹⁴ *LP*, V, 1485.

¹⁵ Judith M. Richards, *Mary Tudor* (London: Routledge, 2008), 157.

¹⁶ John Elder, *The Copie of a Letter sent in to Scotlande of the Arrival and Landyng, and Most Noble Marynge of... Philippe, Prynce of Spaine to the... Princes Marye Queen of England*, (London: John Waylande, 1555), sig. Cv^v.

in Mary's will.¹⁷ Philip only began his gifting shortly before arriving in England, sending Mary a spectacular jewel, the pendant jewel displayed so prominently in Antonis Mor's portrait of the seated queen.¹⁸ In return Mary provided a bejewelled wedding suit and the more potent symbol of power, a collar with the Order of the Garter.¹⁹ The last was assessed by the Venetian 'ambassador to be worth 2000 or 3000 crowns, while the Spanish valued Philip's gift at 50,000 crowns.²⁰ The disparity is striking, but Philip was the wooer and his dowry was a kingdom.

James I's entertainments of his brother-in-law, King Christian IV of Denmark, in 1606 and again in 1614, have a somewhat bathetic character when set against these earlier monarchical efforts to match in status with the rulers of France and the Empire. Competitive ceremonial played little part in the drinking and hunting companionship of the two monarchs, who parted in 1606, says Dudley Carleton caustically, as well pleased with each other 'as kings commonly are' (as though kings met on a regular basis).²¹ Here, however, gift-giving assumed a dominant place, showing James, even in the profligate early years of his reign, distinguishing between what was owed to his subjects and to a royal equal. The largesse from James included a sword belt and accompaniments valued, says Carleton, at £15,000, and Queen Elizabeth's cup of state, worth £5000.²² In return Christian offered among other things the second best Danish ship, though since he wanted a good English vessel called the *White Bear* as a counter-gift, the Earl of Salisbury killed the exchange.²³ Even in 1614, when the days of exorbitant largesse were over, Christian departed with gold plate worth £4000.²⁴

While the first Danish visit is an example of exaggerated generosity by the English monarch, it must have assured James that he was truly a monarch of European stature who could afford the luxury of winning a competitive gift-exchange. The wooing of the Infanta, on the other hand, was fraught with difficulties because of the still visible power of Spain, as well as questions of religion. Charles's impetuous visit to Madrid brought these into acute focus.²⁵ The two monarchs had very different views of the merits of the match: for James it was a goal to be pursued at most prices; for Philip IV an unlikely outcome worth pursuing only in the context of Spain's wider

¹⁷ *CSP Sp*, 1554, 320. David Loades, *Mary Tudor: A Life* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 378–9.

¹⁸ *CSP Sp*, 1554, 309. ¹⁹ Elder, *The Copie of a Letter*, sig. Avi v.

²⁰ *CSP Sp*, 1554, 309. The crown was worth 5s.

²¹ *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain 1603–1624*, ed. Maurice Lee (Rutgers, NJ: State University of New Jersey Press, 1972), 86.

²² The Venetian ambassador dissented from Carleton's view that the English had been most generous in this gift-exchange: he commented that James's presents were of less value than Christian's, though the Queen sent her mother some horses with rich accoutrements: *CSP Ven*, 1603–7, 394.

²³ *CSP Ven*, 1603–7, 86.

²⁴ *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 1939), i, 553. Christian also accumulated gifts from James's subjects, including a gold cup given by the City of London when he passed through: LMA, COL/SJ/27/119/3/38.

²⁵ Debate about the cultural significance of the Spanish match has been revitalized in recent years by two important volumes: Glyn Redworth, *The Prince and the Infanta: the Cultural Politics of the Spanish Match* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003) and Alexander Samson (ed.), *The Spanish Match: Prince Charles's Journey to Madrid 1623* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

European aims. Philip was then placed on the defensive because he had to manage the unprecedented situation created by a royal wooer in Madrid. Elaborate protocol and ceremonial came to the rescue of the Spanish, and kept the prince dangling for months in their gilded cage. Early reports of the welcome offered the prince, including the pamphlet sponsored by the Privy Council—*Journal of the Manner of the Arrival of and Magnificent Entertainment Given to the Prince of Great Britain*—had to be content with formalities, and description of the gift to the prince of grand furnishings for his court chamber. His incognito arrival had prevented him from offering appropriate courtship gifts to the infanta, and habitual Spanish control over giving not sanctioned by the Crown delayed giving by the nobility.

Charles and Buckingham, thwarted in their purpose of carrying off the Infanta, spent much of their time pursuing art purchases, only too willing to turn to purchase when gifts were not forthcoming.²⁶ Only in the summer, when there seemed some possibility that agreement might be reached, was Charles gifted some of the pictures that had transformed his view of European art: Titian's *Portrait of Charles V with a Hound* and his *Jupiter and Antiope*.²⁷ Buckingham was also able to ask, or as he put it 'impudentlie' beg, for the famous elephant, sent to London with a train of camels to gratify James's passion for strange beasts.²⁸ This was the gift of which the Venetian ambassador to London bitchily observed: 'the King of Spain has made his majesty the present of an elephant: I do not know whether it comes as an earnest of the Infanta or instead of her'.²⁹ Sir Richard Weston moaned that his master, Lord Treasurer Cranfield, was 'little in love with such presents which cost his majesty, after he receives them, as much as a garrison'.³⁰ The gifts brought marriage settlement no nearer, even if the present of Titian's *Charles V with a Hound* indicated that a new Charles might be worthy of Habsburg alliance.

By the time of Charles's departure in the autumn of 1623 bluff and counter-bluff by the negotiators left the promised marriage in suspense, but still supposedly viable if Charles maintain his agreement to tolerate Catholicism.³¹ This generated a late orgy of gift-giving, vividly described from the Spanish perspective in the pamphlet written by Andrés Almansa y Mendoza and translated into English at the end of 1623.³² Although Mendoza emphasized the extreme generosity and affection of Philip IV and his Court to the prince and Buckingham, he dwelt particularly

²⁶ Jerry Brotton, *The Sale of the Late King's Goods: Charles I and his Art Collection* (London: Sage, 2007), 94–6.

²⁷ Jerry Brotton, *The Sale of the Late King's Goods*, 97–101.

²⁸ John Nichols, *The Progresses, Processions and Magnificent Festivities of King James the First*, 4 vols. (London: J. B. Nichols, 1828), iv, 847. There is a highly formal letter of thanks from James to Philip IV, focusing only on the elephant: TNA SP94/26/fo.230; J. E. Egerton, 'King James's Beasts', *History Today* 12: 6 (1962), 411–12.

²⁹ CSP Ven, 1623–5, 75.

³⁰ TNA, SP14/151/fo. 62r.

³¹ Redworth, *Prince and the Infanta*, 128–33, argues that Charles was determined against the match before leaving Spain, while Philip IV was pursuing it with some commitment.

³² Andrés Almansa y Mendoza, *The Joyfull Returne of the Most Illustrious Prince Charles, Prince of Great Brittain, from the Court of Spaine* (London: Edward Allde for Nathaniel Butter and Henry Seile, 1625). For a discussion of this text see Henry Ettingham, 'The Greatest News Story since the Resurrection', in Samson, *The Spanish Match*, 75–89.

on the flood of gifts Charles had had to provide in return: a great sword set with diamonds for Philip, a spectacular diamond and other jewels to the queen, strings of pearls and much else to the Infanta, and jewels, cups, and swords to the rest of the royal entourage.³³ This cost more than a garrison: a calculation in the English State Papers relating to Spain puts the value of the presents to the royal family alone at 144,000 ducats.³⁴ This emulative giving was on a scale unprecedented for the English monarchy: it underlines the desperation to secure the match, even in the face of fiscal crisis at home. It proved expense, reaping only shame and frustration. The pearls and other gifts to the Infanta were eventually returned, saving the English some expenditure, but offering an affront that, said the Venetian ambassador, 'the prince has felt... deeply'.³⁵

DIPLOMATIC DIALOGUE AT A DISTANCE

Offering Noble Animals

Early modern summitry was fraught with difficulties: those of geography and political meaning, the latter articulated through the complexities of protocol.³⁶ It was often wiser to avoid such encounters, and depend instead on various forms of distant exchange, as James V did with Henry VIII, and Elizabeth with Mary, Queen of Scots. Although the rapid expansion of diplomatic representation permitted much of this to be conducted through ambassadors, the personal nature of monarchy continued to demand contacts between sovereigns. Here gifts often assumed great importance, replete with diverse signals about amity, status, deference, and even occasionally hostility. And among the gifts through which sovereigns spoke to one another none was more important than the animals associated with riding and the hunt. Diana Carrió-Invernizzi, in her study of diplomacy in seventeenth-century Spanish Italy, remarks that other presents might be dispensed with 'but never horses, mules, or falcons' and, excluding the mules, this observation holds true for the giving and receiving of English monarchs.³⁷

Gifts for the hunt dispatched from one ruler to another always spoke of the shared honour community to which they belonged, while allowing subtle adjustments for status and circumstance. At one extreme were offerings that were

³³ *The Joyfull Returne*, 17–21.

³⁴ TNA, SP94/28/fo.119. There is a similar list in *CSP Ven*, 1623–5, 137. The exchange rate for the ducat was 9s 4d, but an appropriate rough calculation would be two ducats to a pound sterling: this is used as the conversion rate by Pesaro, the Venetian ambassador. Although the estimates of value diverge somewhat, they were probably in the region of £70,000. On the relevant rates of exchange see John J. McCusker, *Money and Exchange in Europe and America, 1600–1775* (London: Macmillan, 1978).

³⁵ *CSP Ven*, 1623–5, 118.

³⁶ A favourite example of the problems of protocol is the discussion in the fifteenth-century advice of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester's usher, about how to manage a dinner at which the pope and emperor were both present: Frederick J. Furnivall (ed.), *Manners and Meals in Olden Times* (London: EETS original series, 1868), 115–99.

³⁷ Carrió-Invernizzi, 'Gifts and Diplomacy', 887.

almost tribute-like. The Duke of Prussia regularly sent hawks to Henry VIII in the 1530s, in the hope of maintaining the king's interest in the affairs of his country. The Duke of Ferrara sent hawks in 1539, probably as a conciliatory political gesture, but their unfortunate bearers fell under suspicion of plotting to poison Henry if they gained access.³⁸ Hawks were frequent gifts from rulers of smaller states to the English Crown—Albert, Duke of Prussia was still sending Henry falcons in 1540 and 1542, and gave similar presents to Elizabeth in 1561.³⁹ James V of Scotland made particular use of his relatively easy access to wild hawks to offer them to his English uncle, as well as to his favoured French cousin.⁴⁰ These examples also point to a disadvantage of hawks as the gift of kings—they were relatively abundant and less obviously costly than many other offerings. They could as readily be the gifts of nobles to one another as the exchanges of kings, and, in the context of the British Isles, even the resource-poor Irish could capture and present them to favoured friends.⁴¹ Offerings of live deer could be an alternative, less readily available to any man of honour mainly because of the costs and difficulties of transport. James VI found that Elizabeth was willing enough to 'amuse' him by assisting in the restocking of his deer: once installed in England he came to regard deer as one of the logical counter-gifts to French presents, so much so that his game warden Thomas Pott became a familiar character at the Court of Henry IV.⁴²

Strategies adopted for avoiding the appearance of modesty in royal giving, here as elsewhere, included the use of the topos that the hawks were a mere token of goodwill, and that, to quote James V, anything else that his kingdom might yield was at his uncle's disposal. Or the scale of the gift, and the ceremony with which it was presented, challenged any idea of inadequacy. The French monarchy, in particular, recognized that a train of hawks, accompanied by their keepers, provided a spectacular form of prestation. The most vivid description comes from Chamberlain in January 1624, when Louis XIII sent fifteen 'cast' of hawks, with some horses and dogs, led by a 'monsieur' who 'made his entrie very magnificently with all his retinue in very goode order and with store of torch-light, which gave more luster to all this long shew'.⁴³ James, beset by gout, nevertheless hobbled out to see his new acquisitions. There was, however, a sting in the tail: the baron

³⁸ *LP*, IX, 293; XIII: ii, 1280; XIV, 370. The poisoning fear seems to be the product of the fevered imagination of Cromwell's informant, since the Ferrarese dukes were regular givers of horses and hawks.

³⁹ *LP*, XV, App. 1; XVII, 977. HMC, *Salisbury*, i, 822.

⁴⁰ There are good examples of James's giving in 1534 and 1535; Thomas Dickson et al. (eds.), *Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland* [hereafter *TA*], 13 vols. (Edinburgh, 1877–1978), vi, 211. Robert Kerr Hannay and Denys Hay (eds.), *Letters of James V* (Edinburgh: HMSO, 1954), 300.

⁴¹ The Attorney-General of Munster lamented to Burghley in 1586 that this was as true internally as internationally. The 'crew' of the Irish make friends with their 'caddows, their hobbies and their hawks' far better than any Englishman could: TNA, SP63/126, fo. 64r. Irish state papers are rich in gifts of hawks, though also in comments about the small Irish horses called hobbies. The caddow—a jackdaw—is less easy to explain in this reference.

⁴² Or so Henry assured the English ambassador in 1608: TNA SP78/54, fo. 65r.

⁴³ *Letters of Chamberlain*, ii, 539.

bearing the gift was a great falconer, and stayed to instruct the English at a cost of about £30 a day: the final cost to the Exchequer for their hospitality was £739.⁴⁴

Lavish presentation of animals more normally involved horses than hawks or deer. Here the possibilities included strings of animals, new types of thoroughbred, or ostentatious accoutrements appropriate for royal riding. There was always competition among European rulers to possess the latest equine fashion, and certain states with distinctive breeding programmes were able to gain kudos through donations of horses. Mantua provides the outstanding example in the early sixteenth century. Its dukes had some of the best breeding stock in Europe, and used their animals to gain friends in the disastrous decades of the Italian Wars. In 1514 there was a complex gift-giving sequence between the Marquis Francesco da Gonzaga, and Henry VIII. Henry was sent four good horses by a ruler who had often sought 'some opportunity of expressing his desire to serve the king'.⁴⁵ Not to be outdone, Henry returned certain horses 'with their furniture', which Gonzaga tellingly described as giving him consequence among his countrymen.⁴⁶ In the competition to give the latter, he pretty clearly won when he sent the English king twelve brood mares, with a promise of more in future years.⁴⁷ This was no mere victory of numbers: the breeding stock of Henry's horses had been improved in a present that could multiply itself. English rulers must have looked particularly enthusiastically for horse gifts from the Habsburgs, since Spanish jennets and the barbaries were other of the prized breeds used to improve English stock. Charles V gave jennets in 1520; four trained barbaries were part of Philip III's gestures after the 1604 Treaty of London, followed by two jennets in 1606; and ten of the forty-six gift-horses brought back by Charles and Buckingham in 1623 were jennets.⁴⁸

The English Crown, like several of its European neighbours, maintained a ban on the export of horses for much of our period. But this was not applied to the sovereign gift, and, to generalize, it seems that horses, particularly geldings, were the offering of choice to foreign monarchs and often from them in return. Henry VIII gave horses to Charles V, Francis I, and James V, as well as the Marquis of Mantua; Elizabeth gave to the French and to James VI; and James and Anne of Denmark to Spain, France, Savoy, and Denmark. At times like the early 1520s and the first years of James's reign, giving rose to a crescendo as European powers signalled the desire for alliance with one another. Horses were still familiar counter-gifts under Charles I, even if by then they accompanied works of art.⁴⁹ They were gifts of sufficient significance to require the lavish performance of royal thanks. James V, who was always in need of good horses and a passionate huntsman, created an elaborate courtly scene to receive the six horses including a jennet and a barbary sent by Henry in 1539. They, and Ralph Sadler, the English ambassador,

⁴⁴ *CSPD*, 1623–5, 156, 201. They also had to be rewarded, apparently with chains of diamonds and the King's image to the value of £800–£1000.

⁴⁵ *LP*, I: ii, 2757, 3024, 3040.

⁴⁶ *LP*, I: ii, 3169.

⁴⁷ *LP*, I: ii, 3459.

⁴⁸ *LP*, III: ii, 600; *CSP Ven*, 1603–7, 101; Egerton, 'King James's Beasts', 408; TNA, SP14/147/fo. 119.

⁴⁹ J. Bruyn and Oliver Millar, 'Notes on the Royal Collection—III: The 'Dutch Gift' to Charles I', *The Burlington Magazine* 104, 712 (July, 1962), 291–4.

were summoned into open Court after the Sunday sermon, and were put through their paces in front of the king, who, after a slightly acerbic comment on the size of the barbary, sang the praise of the munificent gift, and required his courtiers to do the same.⁵⁰ A century later, Charles I and Henrietta Maria did much the same when they viewed the Dutch gift of horses and had them pass by 'once harnessed with the richly trimmed cloths of velvet and twice unharnessed' many lords, being present, also spent high praise on everything'.⁵¹

Horses, and the other wherewithal to hunt which often accompanied them, had many benefits as a form of royal gift, especially in circumventing the high formality of some other forms of exchange, and, by becoming an advocate for the interests of the giver. James I's gift of hawks to Philip III was noted by the Venetian ambassador to Spain as 'showing that both these crowns purpose to pursue their ends and interests, while exchanging signs of cordiality with each other'.⁵² But they had two disadvantages in the competitive race to show status and power. They were not clearly demarcated as unique to a sovereign giver or receiver. Many royal ministers and nobles gave and received horses internationally, some, like the Earl of Leicester, partly as a result of holding office as Master of the Horse, some as part of ambassadorial activity, some simply by virtue of their political standing. Quality or quantity *might* mark out the royal exchange, as for example when Francis I promised 'high bounding and stirring horses' to Henry, or in 1588 when the Danish king was given six great horses with a fair coach by the emperor, but such distinctiveness was not readily achieved.⁵³ There might also be a problem about the quality and appropriateness of a gift. James I twice sent groups of horses to the rulers of Spain, and on both occasions doubts were raised. In 1604 Chamberlain noted the horses and hunting geldings sent with the Earl of Nottingham who was to visit Spain to ratify the Treaty of London. They were saddled (literally) with unlikely horsecloths of heavy and hot material '(and so very improper for that place)', more than this it was 'as yf we sent tress to the woode', to a state rich in fine horses.⁵⁴ A decade later Chamberlain was not convinced much had improved: as a gesture in the development of Anglo-Spanish amity John Finet was sent with 'a rabblement of presents, as pied bulles and kine, grayhounds, spaniels, water dogges, hunting horses, naggess... and many other things els that I remember not'.⁵⁵ This heap of animals apparently met with a cool reception, the reward given to Finet being only a modest gold chain.⁵⁶ Any sovereign gift that was received without warmth

⁵⁰ *The State Papers and Letters of Sir Ralph Sadler, Knight-Banneret*, ed. Arthur Clifford, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: A. Constable, 1809), i, 38–41. For a full discussion of this aspect of Anglo-Scottish gift-giving see Heal 'Anglo-Scottish Gift Exchange', in Boardman and Goodare, *Kings, Lords and Men*, 286–93.

⁵¹ Bruyn and Millar, 'Notes on the Royal Collection', 292.

⁵² *CSP Ven*, 1613–15, 419.

⁵³ Sir Thomas Boleyn to Wolsey, April 1519: *LP*, III: i, 170; *CSP For*, 1558–89, 77.

⁵⁴ *Letters of Chamberlain*, i, 199.

⁵⁵ *Letters of Chamberlain*, i, 563, 502.

⁵⁶ This could be compared with the care taken by Ferdinando de Medici, when he sent hunting gifts to Prince Philip of Spain in 1597, giving thought to his 'well-known obsession with hunting': Rosemarie Mulcahy, *Philip II of Spain, Patron of the Arts* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), 87.

signalled political danger, and Spanish froideur was a particular challenge given James's pursuit of an alliance.

The Rare, the Exotic, and the Luxurious

The 'rabblement' described by Chamberlain was not uncommon in giving between rulers. A gift of welcome to the English throne for James from his distant relative by marriage, Ferdinando de Medici, consisted of two litters and a sedan chair; two horses and four mules; wine from the Medici estates; jewellery; preserves; and other foods including lemons and limes.⁵⁷ This combination of the costly and the merely rare does not seem to have attracted any attention from the news-writers, perhaps because of the spectacular gifts associated with the conclusion of the Treaty of London in the same year. But more was needed if the distinction of fellow sovereigns was to be marked out. Animals which were exotic, difficult to obtain, and (ideally) large, were one useful commodity. Camels, antelope, lions, ostriches, and elephants met these criteria, and attracted successive English, and Scottish rulers. The menagerie in the Tower of London was restocked by Henry VIII, then by James I, who had the greatest passion for unusual animals.⁵⁸ The Duke of Savoy sent James a lioness and a tiger, anticipating the possibility of a marriage treaty with England.⁵⁹ The Algerians produced two lions and tigers as part of their composite gift in 1625.⁶⁰ We have already noted the role of the elephant in the Spanish match: it had been preceded by a similar beast sent from Henry IV in 1593, whose promise, says the French ambassador 'brought forth a fly'—presumably encouraging the Privy Council to take more action in support of Henry's wars.⁶¹ Much earlier Charles IX and Catherine de Medici had tried a similar device with camels, mules, and a coach.⁶² The comment of the Spanish ambassador in London on this latter initiative betrays both the cynicism and the anxiety that unusual gifting raised among diplomats: the French rulers were eager to please Elizabeth and therefore were sending presents that 'woman-like, she should be flattered and pleased'. It was certainly thought that the queen was amused by curiosities live or dead: at Greenwich she had a stuffed bird of paradise and pictures made of peacocks' feathers.⁶³ All this sounds trivial enough, but the politics of the sovereign gift were serious: Elizabeth embarrassed the French ambassador when

⁵⁷ Butters, 'Uses and Abuses of Gifts', 279–80. Another example of 'rabblement', in this case dispatched from England, was the gift to Tsar Feodor after the death of Ivan IV—lions, bulls, dogs, armour, wines, organs, plate, and pearls: Charles Oman, *The English Silver in the Kremlin, 1557–1663* (London: Methuen, 1961), 24.

⁵⁸ Daniel Hahn, *The Tower Menagerie* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 85–112.

⁵⁹ TNA, SP14/74, fo. 42.

⁶⁰ Thomas Birch and Robert Folkestone Williams (eds.), *The Court and Times of Charles the First*, 2 vols. (London: H. Colburn, 1848), i, 11, 15.

⁶¹ TNA, SP78/29/fo.161; SP84/46/fo.116; HMC, *Salisbury*, xiii, 509.

⁶² CSP For, 1564–5, 266; CSP Sp, 1558–67, 414–16.

⁶³ Clare Williams, *Thomas Platter's Travels in England, 1599* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937), 225–6.

the camels were delayed, by complaining to his Spanish counterpart that they would have to go out and find the animals, or she would never receive them.⁶⁴

Expensive and exotic gifts, whether live or inanimate, had to be handled with circumspection, just as Seneca and Burghley had argued great gifts should always be. Exchanges of great jewels, for example, were best confined to familial gestures of affection, or to the specific circumstances of marriage. Christenings, where one monarch stood godparent for the child of another, could justify a grand prestation: Elizabeth, of all monarchs, was remarkable for the gold baptismal basin she gave to her godson Prince James.⁶⁵ Even in cases where a spectacular gift was not immediately connected to the life cycle, one can sometimes infer a link: in 1530, for example, Margaret of Austria sent James V of Scotland a massive confectionery dish, which was possibly a consolation for the breakdown of marriage talks with her niece, Mary of Hungary.⁶⁶ A number of the most spectacular gifts of the early seventeenth century focused on attempts by Savoy and the Medici to engineer a marriage with Prince Henry. And there is an interesting contrast: while Savoy produced traditional status gifts of horses, crystal, and plate, Cosimo II's advisors guided the prince towards bronzes, finely made after the models of Giovanni Bologna, and one of the best set of sculptures to arrive in the royal collection in the early seventeenth century.⁶⁷

The employment of art that was not portraiture as a tool of diplomacy had predictably slow beginnings in England's relations with European powers. There was one remarkable moment when the Calvinists of Ghent considered giving William the Silent Van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece*, as a gift to be passed to Elizabeth.⁶⁸ Italian rulers and Habsburg monarchs grasped the potential by the end of the sixteenth century, but only in the reign of Charles I did works of art become an integral part of English diplomacy.⁶⁹ Then, for example, the formality of Caroline ambassadorial reception included a ceremonial route through the great art collection, displaying, as Rubens noted in 1629, 'incredible quantity of excellent pictures, statues and ancient inscriptions'.⁷⁰ Rubens's visit has always been seen as that of a diplomat who could justify his presence by virtue of his artistic standing and his

⁶⁴ *CSP Sp*, 1558–67, 416.

⁶⁵ The bowl weighed a remarkable 333 ounces: BL, Add. MS. 9772. It was melted down to meet the costs of Mary Queen of Scots's internal war: Philippa Glanville, *Silver in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (London: V. & A. Publishing, 1990), 28.

⁶⁶ Eichberger, 'The Culture of Gifts', 288. Margaret also gave Henry VIII several pieces of plate badged with the Habsburg crown imperial: Glanville, *Silver in England*, 29.

⁶⁷ Katharine Watson and Charles Avery, 'A Grand Ducal Gift of "Giovanni Bologna" Bronzes for Henry, Prince of Wales (1612)', *The Burlington Magazine* 115: 845 (August, 1973), 493–507. When Frederick of the Palatinate returned home after his marriage to Princess Elizabeth he was relatively traditional in his form of gifting, offering Queen Anne on his departure 'an exceeding fair carosse [carriage] made in France', with six horses and coachmen: *Letters of Chamberlain*, i, 435.

⁶⁸ Lorne Campbell, *Early Flemish Pictures in the Collections of H. M. the Queen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. xxix–xxx.

⁶⁹ Elisabeth Cropper (ed.), *The Diplomacy of Art: Artistic Creation and Politics in Seicento Italy* (Milan: Nuova Alfa, 2000).

⁷⁰ *The Letters of Peter Paul Rubens*, trans. and ed. Ruth S. Magurn (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955), 320.



Fig. 6.1 Peter Paul Rubens, *Minerva Protects Pax from Mars*.

© The National Gallery.

commission to paint the Banqueting Hall ceiling at Whitehall.⁷¹ However, it has recently been suggested that Philip IV and his advisors perceived the artist himself as the gift to the English king, his presence showing Spanish understanding of Charles's passion for art, as well as providing the opportunity to persuade him of the virtues of a peace treaty.⁷² The painter became an assurance of equality of status and honour between rulers, while also obliging the monarch who received him to pay heed to his political message. The negotiations for a formal peace with Spain proved lengthy and tortuous and Rubens's visit was prolonged, and the painter played his part not only by cautious diplomacy, but by presenting Charles with his great image *Minerva Protects Pax from Mars* (see Figure 6.1). He was both a giver of gifts and himself a gift, and in that dual role did much to move Charles towards reconciliation with the Habsburgs.⁷³

Presents from and to rulers outside the charmed circle of Western Europe seem to have been regarded as occupying a distinct category, and there was an early

⁷¹ Gregory Martin, *Rubens in London: Art and Diplomacy* (London: Harvey Millar, 2011).

⁷² Michael Auwers, 'The Gift of Rubens: Rethinking the Concept of Gift-Giving in Early Modern Diplomacy', *European History Quarterly* 43: 3 (2013), 421–41. I am grateful to Guy Rowlands for this reference.

⁷³ The Dutch Republic also tried art as persuasion in more conventional ways. They sent Charles pictures of landscapes and altar pieces, described by the Venetian ambassador as 'exquisite': *CSP Ven*, 1632–6, 540; Bruyn and Millar, 'Notes on the Royal Collection', 292.

adoption of the notion that extravagant, or even 'barbaric', display was to be expected of these exchanges. Outgoing gifts from '*rex et regnum*' were used as the bait for the development of regular communication, whose objective was usually the support of new trades. The earliest initiatives are those of the Muscovy Company, beginning in 1555 and extending until 1635, in which the pursuit of trading privileges regularly masqueraded as embassies, often with active royal support. The Company might supply at least part of the cost of gifts: the endorsement was regal. Elizabeth's silver in 1571, for example, was presented with an urbane speech from her ambassador, Anthony Jenkinson, emphasizing that it was friendship between monarchs, rather than the value of the gift, that was of significance.⁷⁴ The queen was, however, trapped into diplomatic embarrassment when first Ivan the Terrible and then Boris Gudonov took trading friendship to extend to negotiations for an English bride, preferably one with royal blood.⁷⁵ Two of the Jacobean embassies to Russia, in 1604 and 1620, certainly did not stint on valuable offerings: the former gave the coach that still survives, as well as rich silver, and the latter some distinctive crystal as well as dramatic silver-gilt plate.⁷⁶

Exotic the exchanges with Russia may have been, but the English monarchy was regularly reminded that the Tsar understood the value of what was presented to him. Inadequate gifts were abruptly returned, threatening the beneficial cycle that so concerned the Company. Ivan might overvalue himself as a potential suitor in England: on the other hand it was possible to calculate the precise cost of presents and to react vigorously to any perceived affront. Giles Fletcher's plate was returned to him as inappropriate and in 1591 Elizabeth was told that her presents had not been adequate, and therefore the next ambassador to England 'will likewise abate of ours'.⁷⁷ The 1618 embassy of Sir Dudley Digges went wrong because he left subordinates to present gifts, but when it was discovered that they had no power to negotiate on key issues, the Tsar ordered the return of the presents.⁷⁸ The tsars were only too willing to look gift horses in the mouth if they felt their friendship was undervalued.

The Turkey Company was just as in need of trade privileges as those of the Muscovy Company, and contact with the Ottoman Court was made by an English merchant, William Harborne, under royal orders.⁷⁹ This was carefully concealed because of the hostility of other European powers, and only assumed its formal, ambassadorial appearance five years later in 1582. However, as early as 1579,

⁷⁴ E. D. Morgan and C. H. Coote (eds.), *Early Voyages and Travels in Russia and Persia* (London: Hakluyt Society 72–3, 1886), ii, 311.

⁷⁵ Henry Ellis, *Original Letters Illustrative of English History*, first ser., 3 vols. (London: Harding et al., 1824), iii, 47–51.

⁷⁶ Oman, *English Silver*, 28, 33–4; Olga Dmitrieva, 'From Whitehall to the Kremlin: the Diplomacy and Political Culture of the England and Russian Courts,' in Olga Dmitrieva and Tessa Murdoch (eds.), *Tudors, Stuarts and the Russian Tsars* (London: V. & A. Publishing, 2013), 24–6.

⁷⁷ George Tolstoy, *The First Forty Years of Intercourse Between England and Russia, 1553–93* (St. Petersburg: 1875), 401.

⁷⁸ Oman, *English Silver*, 33.

⁷⁹ Skilliter, *William Harborne*, 35–48, 199–200; Lisa Jardine, 'Gloriana Rules the Waves: or, the Advantage of Being Excommunicated (and a Woman)', *TRHS* 6th ser.14 (2004), 209–22.

Murad III despatched a gift letter, suitably fastened with silver, requesting friendship and offering freedom to English merchants, and Elizabeth had responded with exotic gifts in support of Harborne's residency. They included an elaborate mechanical clock, full of silver statuary, and covered with jewels.⁸⁰ In 1593, after much prompting from the Turkey Company, the queen sent a second gift of her jewel-encrusted picture, gilt plate, and other things to Safiye, the wife of Murad III and mother of Mehmed III. Her remarkable exchanges with the Sultana culminated in the despatch in 1599 of the extraordinary gifts of an organ and a coach, the latter valued at £600.⁸¹ The return offerings were equally exotic, though less intrinsically valuable: Safiye was advised to send 'a sute of princely attire being after the Turkish fashion... for the rarenesse thereof... acceptable in England', and did so, with some accompanying jewels.⁸² The English gifts were, as Lisa Jardine has observed, 'largely pointless extravagance', but stresses the commercial benefits such 'toys' might attract.⁸³

While the benefits of these exchanges with alien princes were intended to be brutally economic, there could also be a residual payback to the Crown in the impact made by the exotic at the Court. In the early Stuart period, as Britain's involvement in the networks of European diplomacy expanded, ambassadors came and went to Whitehall or Greenwich closely observed and ceremoniously treated, but rarely marked out by their grand largesse. Exceptions are the Russian visits of 1613, 1617, and 1621, and Sir Thomas Roe's offerings from the 'Great Mughal'. All three Russian visits produced rare gifts of furs, Persian carpets, and cloth of gold. The account Chamberlain gives of the 1617 one may be taken as exemplary. The presents were carried publicly into Court by the ambassadors' servants and were:

The greatest that ever came thence, the very fures being estimated by those that are skifull at better than 6000 li, though some talke of much more. There were divers hawkes with coates and coverings of crimsen satten and other colours embroidered with pearle, a riche Persian dagger and knife, bowes and arrows, Persian cloth of gold with divers other things I remember not; I was promised a list of all, but seing yt comes not I must tary till my next. The King was very much pleased, and the more when he understood Quene Elizabeth never had such a present thence.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Susan Skilliter, 'Three Letters from the Ottoman "Sultana" Safiye to Queen Elizabeth I', in *Documents from Islamic Chanceries*, Samuel M. Stern (ed.), 1st ser. (Oxford: Cassirer, 1965), 146.

⁸¹ Susan Skilliter, 'Three Letters from the Ottoman "Sultana"', 149–51. TNA, SP97/4, fos. 45, 49, 50. There is also an interesting request from the Sultana, via her Jewish agent, for cosmetics from Elizabeth: Ellis, *Original Letters*, 1st ser., iii, 53–5.

⁸² This was the advice of Edward Barton, the ambassador, to Safiye: Richard Hakluyt, *The Principall Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, 12 vols. (Glasgow: Hakluyt Society, 1903–5), vi, 102. Safiye sent almost identical return presents in 1593 and 1599, the former valued by Barton at £120, but only after several items had been embezzled.

⁸³ Jardine, 'Gloriana Rules the Waves', 222.

⁸⁴ *Letters of Chamberlain*, ii, 117. John Finet's account in his *Finetti Philoxenis: som choice observations of Sir John Finett, Knight, and Master of Ceremonies to the Two Last Kings* (London: H. Twyford & G. Bedell, 1656), 38–9, is essentially the same, though his tone suggests some contempt for Russian hubris and 'superstition': 'all their servants... marched all the way on foot... carrying before them with ostentation to open view some parcell of the various presents'.

On this occasion a plurality of gifts was not, for Chamberlain, a ‘rabblement’ but a moment of accessing the exotic and, by implication, himself seeing the honour done to James as affirming his reputation. Roe’s appearance from the Indies in 1619, with antelopes, ‘a straunge and bewtifull kind of red-deare’ tents, carpets, and trinkets sent from the moghul seems more immediately to be indulging the taste of king and courtiers for the alien and curious, but even here there is an implication that the British monarch now had a reach far beyond the region of Western Europe.

The Prince’s Image

Gold and silver, jewels, and beasts were the great gifts suitable for exchange between rulers, and recognized as such by long custom and usage. However, there was one newer form of offering with a very distinctive impact. The royal portrait became a key element in the diplomacy of Renaissance Europe.⁸⁵ Portraits were more than straightforward visual identifiers (though they clearly had the purpose of showing a likeness). In a period that did not fully separate the sign and the signifier, the portrait could personate the distant ruler, making, as Alberti says, ‘the absent present, as friendship is said to do’.⁸⁶ Even though English engagement with the changing aesthetics of European portraiture was frankly patchy, Henry VIII and his successors were quick to grasp the political value of the royal image abroad as well as at home. Marriage negotiations formed a first layer of visual deposit, on which were then built wider dynastic interests and displays of political amity.

The idea that the prince should have the opportunity to view his (or her) potential spouse through an image was already accepted practice at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The English requested a painting of Catherine of Aragon from the Spanish negotiators in 1488.⁸⁷ Henry VII sent an image of his daughter Margaret to James IV of Scotland in 1502, just ahead of the marriage between them and, since he sent the picture north with an artist it is a reasonable supposition that James was painted in return.⁸⁸ In 1514 Louis XII received a portrait of Margaret’s sister Mary on the eve of his marriage, whose negotiations had until then been kept a close secret.⁸⁹ The pattern continued throughout the period: Mary I received two images of Prince Philip before her marriage, including a Titian on loan from Mary of Hungary, and she returned one of herself.⁹⁰ James’s daughter Princess

⁸⁵ What follows is much indebted to Tracey Sowerby, ‘“A Memorial and Pledge of Faith”’, *EHR* 129 (2014), 296–331. I am also grateful to Tracey for discussions of the significance of portraiture in diplomacy.

⁸⁶ Alberti was echoing Cicero’s sentiments on friendship from *De amicitia*: Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. John R. Spencer (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970), Bk. 2: 1; Jennifer Fletcher, ‘Substitution and Diplomacy’, in Lorne Campbell et al. (eds.), *Renaissance Faces: Van Eyck to Titian* (London: National Gallery, 2008), 46–51.

⁸⁷ *CSP Sp*, 1485–1509, 21. Frederick Hepburn, ‘The Portraiture of Prince Arthur and Katherine of Aragon’, in Steven Gunn and L. Monckton (eds.), *Arthur Tudor, Prince of Wales: Life, Death and Commemoration* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2009), 37–45.

⁸⁸ *TA*, ii, 341.

⁸⁹ *CSP Milan*, 1385–1618, 437.

⁹⁰ *CSP Sp*, 1553, 355, 367–8, 384, 407–8.

Elizabeth seems to have commissioned a portrait of Frederick of the Palatinate, and Henrietta Maria was inevitably sent an image of Charles.⁹¹

Against these consummated examples must be set the failed marriage negotiations that litter the period. In these we might usefully distinguish the cases in which the image played an essentially passive role, at most displaying that serious thought was given to negotiations, and those in which the portrait appears to have some agency in the transactions. When the future Mary I and the French Dauphin exchanged portraits in 1519, the two infants were not of an age to be influenced by the appearance of their espoused.⁹² The images passed between Edward VI and Elizabeth, the daughter of Henry II, were of more significance, but as affirmation that the marriage might take place rather than independent signifiers of royal affect.⁹³ By way of comparison, Holbein's famous portraits of Anne of Cleves and Christina of Milan, played at least some part in Henry VIII's choice of marriage partners.⁹⁴ Henry VII had earlier contemplated as a choice of second queen either Margaret of Austria or Joanna of Naples, receiving pictures of both and asking for an image of the latter 'as near as it may be possible to the very visage countenance and semblance of the said queen'.⁹⁵ Elizabeth elevated to an art this use of the portrait as a tool of marriage negotiations. While claiming to find images untrustworthy, she sent one of her own to Vienna to keep Habsburg engagement in her negotiations with the Archduke; was said to have his image at the head of her bed; presented her picture to the French at the beginning of marriage negotiations there; and looked critically at a painting of the Duke of Alençon in 1573, thereby spreading deep consternation among agents for the French interest. Later she displayed her intimate affection for the duke by receiving a jewel with a frog containing her suitor's picture, and by sending him intimate gifts including a miniature of herself.⁹⁶

Images used in the promotion or sealing of marriage alliances are only the most explicit category of their more general use in the pursuit of dynastic aims. This is shown most explicitly in the gifting of series of paintings of a whole generation of a royal family, rather than just the affianced. Henry VII, in the Scottish example already cited, sent paintings of himself, Elizabeth of York, and Arthur along with that of Margaret. In 1532 Henry VIII requested, and apparently received, images of the French king and his children.⁹⁷ An obvious objective was to show the health and success of a House. And, as the use of the

⁹¹ Catharine MacLeod (ed.), *The Lost Prince: the Life and Death of Henry Stuart* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2012), 157. *CSP Ven*, 1623–5, 510.

⁹² *CSP Ven*, 1509–19, 566.

⁹³ *CSP Sp*, 1550–52, 171, 217, 265, 298–9.

⁹⁴ Susan Foister, *Holbein and England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 200–4.

⁹⁵ Hepburn, 'Portrait of Henry VII', 222–57; James Gairdner (ed.), *Historia Regis Henrici Septimi* (London: Longman et al., 1858), 237.

⁹⁶ BL, Royal MS. App. 68, fo. 33v: Susan Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (London: Routledge, 1995), 155. She also allegedly said of the painting sent her by Erik XIV of Sweden that if he was as handsome as his portrait no one could resist him: quoted in Karen Hearn (ed.), *Dynasties: Painting in Tudor and Jacobean England 1530–1630* (London: Tate Publishing, 1995), 93.

⁹⁷ BL, Add. MS. 25114, fo. 74v (*LP*, V, 791).

portrait became more common, royal exchanges also had to be marked out by the quality of the display. Scale was one way of achieving this; artistic virtuosity another. Sumptuous portraits of the Archduke and Archduchess Albert and Isabella, governors of the Southern Netherlands, that were sent to James I at the beginning of his reign, had to be matched by equally large images of James, Anne of Denmark, and 'the prince', by de Critz, despatched in 1606.⁹⁸ In the 1630s Henrietta Maria chose virtuosity and sent Van Dyck's images of herself, Charles and their eldest son to Philip IV. In this latter case the implicit boast that the Stuarts had a painter to rival Velázquez was somewhat subverted by the awareness in Madrid that they were not originals: the Spanish, explained the resident agent, 'are now become more judicious in and more affectioned unto the art of painting then they have beene'.⁹⁹ The gift was reciprocated by what appears to be a nicely judged gesture, a studio copy of Velázquez's painting of Philip IV, his wife, and the Prince Baltasar Carlos.¹⁰⁰

Dynasticism in its turn morphed into the general political interest that could be served by royal portraiture. The complexity and diversity of the examples in these first centuries of representational art means that they cannot all be pursued in detail here. Some gifts carried very explicit messages: when Francis I's sister sent Henry VIII miniatures of the king and his two sons in 1526 it was to persuade his 'brother' to mediate with the emperor who held the royal family captive after the Battle of Pavia. The pictures and their cases referred explicitly to the obligation of an ally to help to free the princes, and a delighted Henry had apparently declared himself proud to 'testify eternally' to the royal request.¹⁰¹ Henry VII had had himself painted in 1505 wearing the Order of the Golden Fleece when he sought a Netherlandish alliance—this against the usual pattern in which princes were represented wearing only the collar of their own chivalric order.¹⁰² More commonly, British monarchs gave and received portraits as a form of generalized amity, providing a visual focus for expressions of alliance and friendship. Since Henry VIII owned at least four pictures of Charles V and eight of Francis I, we obviously cannot assume that images sustained constant political alliance: rather that the monarch could lay claim to the status of an equal of one ruler or the other depending upon circumstance.¹⁰³ Elizabeth, more cautious than her father in her contacts with other monarchs, nevertheless gave portraits to the rulers of France, Scotland, Denmark, Sweden, Russia, some German principalities, and to the Sultan.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ Marcel De Maeyer, *Albrecht et Isabella en de Schilderkunst* (Brussels: Academie voor Wetenschappen, 1955), 276. Hearn, *Dynasties*, 182–3. MacLeod, *The Lost Prince*, 52–3.

⁹⁹ TNA, SP94/40, fo. 150r.

¹⁰⁰ Enriqueta Harris, 'Velazquez and Charles I: Antique Busts and Modern Paintings from Spain for the Royal Collection', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 30 (1967), 416–20.

¹⁰¹ *CSP Ven*, 1520–26, 611, 624; *CSP Milan*, 1385–1618, 468–9; *LP*, IV: ii, 2651.

¹⁰² Hepburn, 'Portrait of Henry VII', 229–30.

¹⁰³ David Starkey (ed.), *The Inventory of Henry VIII: the Transcript* (London: Society of Antiquaries, 1998), 237–40, 384–5. Neither Henry's inventory, nor the detailed list of paintings in the Crown's possession by the end of the 1630s, label portraits of foreign rulers as gifts.

¹⁰⁴ Sowerby, 'A Memorial and Pledge of Faith', 314, 321.

When this involved not only trading contacts, but important political alliance, she needed assurance that this gift of her own image was revered. Princes like Frederick II of Denmark and Frederick IV of the Palatinate, duly obliged. The former took 'much contentment' in wearing her picture in a gold pendant; the latter asked for a miniature to hang on his neck.¹⁰⁵

The gift of the royal image, and particularly the use to which it could subsequently be put, is shown in the tense exchanges between Elizabeth and Mary, Queen of Scots. Both monarchs used the portraiture to articulate friendship, while endeavouring to maintain their political control. Elizabeth was clear that, when Mary asked to see her image 'because the one of us cannot see thother', she would only reciprocate after the Scottish gift had been sent.¹⁰⁶ Mary obliged quite quickly: even then there was a considerable delay, until Elizabeth made her return gesture in 1562. The arrival of the picture prompted Mary to ask the English ambassador, Thomas Randolph, how good a likeness it was. Randolph replied that, though a good resemblance, it did not do full justice to his mistress's qualities.¹⁰⁷ This was in part a ploy to maintain Mary in hopes of a face-to-face meeting—an idea always more favoured by the Scots than Elizabeth, and one which was rapidly becoming less viable. By 1564 Elizabeth was trying to use her cousin's portrait to balance amity with more explicit closure. With the Scots ambassador James Melville she gazed on the image 'with great delight', claiming that she had to do so because an actual meeting was so far distant.¹⁰⁸

In this instance the monarchical image has become a stage prop in a calculative power play, losing much of its ability to fructify a relationship. But the Anglo-Scottish transaction also shows that reputation was engaged on both sides: the transaction had to appear to be equal and had to be endorsed overtly by the recipient. Elizabeth's greater control of the exchange does not conceal her anxiety about the ways in which her gift might be used, or the importance of ensuring that her image, above all presents, was to be received with honour and admiration. She, with her predecessors and successors, was not so much 'selling' the monarchy as letting its representation loose into a competitive world where friends and allies needed the assurance of a strong monarchical image, and enemies were reminded that England's ruler could articulate authority through art.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ TNA, SP 75/1, fo. 169r. *CSP For*, 1586—88, 198.

¹⁰⁶ TNA, SP 70/17, fo. 82r. Mary was clear, however, that she would only send her image on the assumption that Elizabeth would reciprocate.

¹⁰⁷ *CSP 1547—63*, 639.

¹⁰⁸ *The Memoirs of Sir James Melvil of Halhill* (Edinburgh: T. & W. Ruddimans, 1735), 97. For more detailed consideration of this set of exchanges, see Heal, 'Anglo-Scottish Gift Exchange', in Boardman and Goodare, *Kings, Lords and Men*, 287—91.

¹⁰⁹ The subtitle of Kevin Sharpe's volume on Tudor images is here far more suggestive than its main heading: *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in Sixteenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

GIVING TO THE REPRESENTATIVES OF MONARCHS

While most gifts between rulers formed a kind of exchange by semaphore, necessary for assuring princes from a distance that they belonged to the correct club, the main labour of diplomacy always devolved upon their ministers and other servants. It was therefore logical that those in any form of international service were participants in the cycle of benefits that flowed between states. Reward was expected for skilled negotiation or representation, from the foreign princes to whom diplomats were sent as well as their own masters. As ambassadorial practice developed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and regular missions staffed by men trained in diplomacy became normal, this system of reward also began to achieve a sort of standardization labelled 'measured reciprocity' by Maija Jansson.¹¹⁰ But alongside this increasingly formal structure of exchange there remained far more traditional offerings: presents for key ministers, favourites, and courtiers from foreign monarchs, rewards for those who were merely the messengers of kings, and a series of less publicized gifts/pensions/bribes through which men of influence favouring a foreign prince might be encouraged.

Bribes, in the sense of cash payments for information, were an inevitable part of the ambassador's armoury: without them it is difficult to see how he could have served adequately in a strange land. The Venetian ambassador, Nicolo Molin, was unusually blunt in calling payments for support by their name in 1604, and in lamenting that 'bribery is so general in this country that it is useless to hope for anything unless this method is adopted'.¹¹¹ However, pensions and similar foreign rewards were the stuff of English political practice, and culturally acceptable. Since Henry VIII himself did not hesitate to accept a French pension, why should others not behave likewise? Wolsey provides the spectacular case of a minister gifted a long-term benefit by the French: his pension by 1525 amounted to over £2000 per annum, and from 1527 it had leapt to a massive £7500. The French were famously spend-thrift with pensions, but the scale of Wolsey's benefit is suggested by payments to the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk and the Earl of Shrewsbury of only about £100 each.¹¹² And Charles V, though somewhat more reluctant to shower wealth on the cardinal, promised 18,000 livres a year for the change of alliance in 1521.¹¹³ The emperor invested quite heavily in gifts and promises of pensions in the early months of 1554 to make the Spanish match a reality.¹¹⁴ Bishop Gardiner told the ambassador, Simon Renard, that he must learn from the French. When they wanted to 'treat' with the English they always offered gifts, and Philip must

¹¹⁰ Maija Jansson, 'Measured Reciprocity: English Ambassadorial Gift Exchange in the 17th and 18th Centuries', *Journal of Early Modern History* 9: 3–4 (2005), 348–70.

¹¹¹ *CSP Ven*, 1603–7, 183.

¹¹² *LP*, II, 4354.

¹¹³ Albert Frederick Pollard, *Wolsey* (London: Longmans, 1913), 115–16.

¹¹⁴ Elmore Harris Harbison, *Rival Ambassadors at the Court of Queen Mary* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1940), 149, 340–1.

therefore do likewise, for the English 'are a nation that has to be kept friendly by means of gifts and liberalities'.¹¹⁵

The Spanish paid some pensions and gave 'gifts' during Philip's English residence, but their major impact on English attitudes to foreign rewards came in the prelude to the Treaty of London in 1604. Then the Venetian ambassador to Madrid reported their intention to 'bribe' English ministers, an old method adopted successfully in France.¹¹⁶ It was an old policy in Scotland as well: several of James's nobles had long been in receipt of Spanish pensions.¹¹⁷ Once the Treaty was safely concluded the Spanish ambassador, Juan de Taxis, and the Constable of Castile, descended on the Court with a shower of gifts, creating such excitement that it caused Nicolo Molin to observe, 'since my arrival in this Court ten months ago I have heard of nothing so often as presents'.¹¹⁸ The plan was also to reward the Lord Admiral and several others with Spanish pensions of 40,000 crowns a year.¹¹⁹ These were eventually settled on a number of privy councillors, including Sir Robert Cecil, and the Earl of Northampton, with royal approval.¹²⁰

The idea of paying either established pensions or rich gifts to those who counselled a foreign prince was, however, never fully accepted as ethical. Chièvres, leading counsellor to Charles V, refused an English pension on leaving London in 1518, though he was willing to receive a gratuity instead.¹²¹ The apparent ease with which the English accepted their *douceurs* in the first half of the sixteenth century began to decline under Elizabeth. The queen, appointing William Cecil as Secretary, explicitly stressed that he should receive no gifts that might involve disloyalty to the State.¹²² Elizabeth's first ambassador to Scotland, Thomas Randolph, indignantly refuted that there could be an English minister on whom Mary's regime might bestow 'a good torne'.¹²³ Both the French and the Spanish continued to consider offerings: indeed the Spanish ambassador Mendoza spent much time and energy in 1579 trying to persuade Philip II to pension (or otherwise reward) the Earl of Sussex and Lord Burghley. Sussex, always impecunious, seemed eager enough to take the bait, but was forestalled by Philip's slow response. Only Sir James Croft, Comptroller of the Household and marginal member of the Privy Council, was actually pensioned, professing himself 'ready to serve in everything he honourably could'.¹²⁴ Notwithstanding some efforts of this kind, the Elizabethan assumption was that privy councillors should not normally be in receipt of monies that might sway them in favour of a foreign power. And foreign rulers in their turn questioned the benefit of too much largesse: Philip II told Mendoza only to give

¹¹⁵ *CSP Sp*, 1554, 169, 202.

¹¹⁶ *CSP Ven*, 1603—7, 82, 104.

¹¹⁷ *CSP Sp*, 1580—86, 344. For a more extensive discussion of Scottish pensions, in this case from the English, see Keith M. Brown, 'The Price of Friendship: the "Well Affected" and English Economic Clientage in Scotland before 1603', in Roger A. Mason (ed.), *Scotland and England, 1286—1815* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1987), 139—62.

¹¹⁸ *CSP Ven*, 1603—7, 179.

¹¹⁹ *CSP Ven*, 1603—7, 262.

¹²⁰ TNA, SP31/12/34, 35.

¹²¹ *LP*, II, 3647.

¹²² TNA, SP12/1, fo.12'.

¹²³ Randolph to Cecil, 27th October, 1561: *CSP*, 1547—1563, 565. Randolph's source pointed out, reasonably, that Maitland of Lethington was pensioned by Elizabeth.

¹²⁴ *CSP Sp*, 1568—79, 557, 587—8, 610, 669, 674. *HoP*, *Commons 1558—1603*, i, 674.

when he was sure English councillors would act 'sincerely and straightforwardly' in Spain's interest, not casting 'our seed on the sand'.¹²⁵

Gifts probably needed less concealment than settled payments, though only a narrow ethical line divided present from pension. Indeed for the Spanish the line seems to be fiscal and political, rather than moral. Mendoza argued in the case of Lord Henry Howard that the latter could be pensioned for around 1000 crowns, and held tightly to the Spanish interest, whereas 'if your Majesty makes him a present, you could not give him less than three times that sum'.¹²⁶ In 1610 the Venetian ambassador observed that Velasco, his Spanish counterpart, was still trying to make great chains of gold to bind ministers to serve the interests of his master. Both gifts and pensions had, the Venetians judged, cost the Spanish sums 'passing belief', and by 1615 the Count of Gondomar had convinced them that he was advising the Duke of Lerma that nothing had been achieved.¹²⁷ This did not permanently discourage the Spanish however. They once again gave pensions to promising ministers in the aftermath of the 1630 Treaty.¹²⁸

For the recipients the form of the reward/payment probably mattered less than its level and the constrictions that it imposed on political action. Pensions might bind, but also offered some security, and it was not clear that gifts avoided the taint of bribes. When the ambassador of the Spanish Netherlands presented the negotiators of the Treaty of London with rewards in public the Venetians were quick to conclude that 'what is done in secret' was conjectured to be greater.¹²⁹ Paradoxically, Wolsey's behaviour was so public that he may have avoided some of this speculation: he scarcely tried to hide his pensions, and his gifts from the French monarch were flaunted with ostentatious pleasure. His image of the Virgin and an altar service from Francis, on display at the negotiations with the French ambassadors in 1527, were part of the most sumptuous possible display.¹³⁰ Wolsey was also marked out from other ministers by his full participation in gift-exchanges with monarchs. At the Field of Cloth of Gold, Wolsey's giving might even seem to have outshone Henry's: Francis received from him, among other things, a great gold salt crowned with a George and Dragon.¹³¹

¹²⁵ *CSP Sp*, 1568–79, 615. Lord Henry Howard was also pensioned serving, said Mendoza, 'with his usual care and intelligence', but he was not a privy councillor at the time. *CSP Sp*, 1580–86, 315–16, 364, 403; Linda Levy Peck, *Northampton: Patronage and Policy at the Court of James I* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982), 70.

¹²⁶ *CSP Sp*, 1580–6, 316, 364, latter quoted in Peck, *Northampton*, 70.

¹²⁷ *CSP Ven*, 1607–10, 494–5; 1613–15, 326. There are of course many of the smoking mirrors of diplomacy here—Gondomar had no reason to share his intimate thoughts with the Duke of Lerma accurately, while Foscanini and the Venetians were always eager to look for divisions between London and Madrid. The Venetians also believed, probably correctly, that the dukes of Savoy were giving gifts to suitable courtiers, creating dependence to promote matrimonial alliance: *CSP Ven*, 1613–15, 120.

¹²⁸ Albert J. Loomie, 'The Spanish Faction at the Court of Charles I, 1630–1638', *BIHR*, 59 (1986), 37–49.

¹²⁹ *CSP Ven*, 1603–7, 175, 239.

¹³⁰ *CSP Ven*, 1527–33, 91. Steven J. Gunn and Philip G. Lindley (eds.), *Cardinal Wolsey: Church, State and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 44–5.

¹³¹ Glanville, 'Wolsey and the Goldsmiths', in Gunn and Lindley, 139. It was unusual for subjects to give to foreign princes, but Sir Thomas Smith, leading the Muscovite embassy in 1604, gave a chain of pearls to the empress, and two clusters of cups to Boris Gudonov: Oman, *English Silver*, 28. And, in a reverse case, the Spanish ambassador to London gave Charles I two jennets in 1637—his departure gift

Such gifts were ceremonial signals, and as such should normally be on display, confirming the relationship between princes and rewarding their representatives. In grand moments, especially at the negotiation and signing of treaties, the host regime was constrained to display great hospitality (including gifts), the guest regime to scatter largesse with full generosity. The 1604 Treaty of London was the apogee of this arrangement for the English as hosts, though the 1527 Treaty of 'Eternal Peace', also known as that of Westminster and London, with the French was almost as spectacular.¹³² The gifts involved in these, and similar accord arrangements, were calibrated to meet the grandeur of the circumstances, often to include secondary treaty signings by the participating monarchs, and a cycle of rewards to messengers as well as the main negotiators. The episodic nature of negotiations of this type meant that there was little reason to standardize the rewards given to royal servants, which were surely largely a response to the political significance of the occasion. In 1527, when Wolsey at least was celebrating the triumph of his diplomacy, the French ambassadors were sent home with 'riche gownes, horsses, or goodly geldyngs', weighty gold chains, plate of great value and rewards down to the humblest of their servants. For Cavendish this was a triumph of royal and ministerial generosity, though he adds that it was difficult to quantify the reputational return: 'what prayse or commendacions they made in theyr countrie at theyr retorne, in good faythe I cannot tell you, for I never hard any thyng therof'.¹³³ A century later, the Duke of Buckingham actually did achieve success in the negotiations for Charles's French marriage, the £80,000 in rewards with which he was said to have returned marked the importance of the coup.¹³⁴

The quotidian experience of English diplomacy was far less glamorous, marked above all by routine 'ordinary' missions in the sixteenth century and by a general movement from the occasional to the established embassy.¹³⁵ Though much of Wolsey's frenetic diplomatic activity was managed through individual missions, by the end of the 1520s there were regularly settled French, Imperial, and Venetian ambassadors to London, and English representatives with the emperor, the French king, Venice, and the papacy.¹³⁶ In both specific and general missions Continental

from the king was four horses, to avoid any implication of indebtedness: *Ceremonies of Charles I*, 216, 251.

¹³² For 1527, but with nothing about gifts, see Charles Giry-Deloison, 'A Diplomatic Revolution? Anglo-French Relations and the Treaties of 1527', in Starkey, *Henry VIII: A European Court*, 77–87. The gifts given to the French signatories of the 1546 Anglo-French treaty were equally lavish, including a sideboard of gold plate given to the Admiral of France: *LP*, XXI: ii, 14.

¹³³ George Cavendish, *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*, ed. Richard S. Sylvester (Oxford: *EETS*, 243, 1959), 74.

¹³⁴ Thomas Locke to Sir Dudley Carleton, 1st June, 1625: TNA, SP16/3, fo. 8^r. Though this also, in the view of the newsletter writers, demonstrated his personal greed, rather than rewarding his true service of monarch or nation.

¹³⁵ There are whole categories of emissaries, including messengers, agents, and members of trading companies who are not covered by this comment, which is focused on those sent to represent a sovereign prince 'to his equal forme'—Jean Hotman, *The Ambassador*, (London: James Shawe, 1603), sig. I 5^r.

¹³⁶ The scale of this diplomatic exchange is indicated by the calculation that there were twenty-two resident missions to the French Court during the reign of Henry VIII: Luke MacMahon, 'Courtesy and Conflict: the Experience of English Diplomatic Personnel at the Court of Francis I', in David

practice pointed to a growing need for the English to settle procedure, precedence and the legitimate expectations of such representatives.¹³⁷ The appointment by James I of a Master of Ceremonies to manage the ambassadorial corps is a key indication of the British belatedly responding to these pressures. By then, of course, there was extensive experience of the sending and receiving of long missions, and how the reputational aspects of diplomacy should be handled.

In general the longer the stay of an ambassador, the less necessity for complimentary exchanges and therefore a reduced role for gift-exchange. This may be partly why handbooks for ambassadors spend little time on the process, or value, of giving. What is said, however, is significant, and underlines the importance of conducting the duties of a representative in the fully public context of the Court to which he was assigned. The doyen of later sixteenth-century advice books—Jean Hotman's *The Ambassador*—touches on gifts as part of the manners required of the ambassador. No presents should be received, either from subjects, or even from the prince to whom he is assigned, 'unlesse at such time, as . . . he is ready to take horse and depart'. Gifts oblige, and make slaves of those who receive them—Wolsey and Northampton might have taken note.¹³⁸ This apparently simple rule was not always easily adhered to, either by ambassadors or their hosts. There were genuinely grey areas of conduct: did, for example, the gift of hospitality count as such? Was reward permitted for bringing gifts to the prince if you were part of an established mission? Above all, what financial limit should be set on departure gifts?

There were also the issues of precedence that bedevilled the growth of diplomacy throughout Europe. There had to be a hierarchy of some kind, but at the top it could cause major conflict between the French and the Spanish, and smaller states were often unwilling to accept their assigned position. We see this problem in all its baroque detail in the notebooks of John Finet, the Master of Ceremonies, to James I and to Charles I. He was required to consume vast energy and exercise endless diplomacy to keep the resident representatives in reasonably good humour. Precedence mattered: it was a form of situational communication that ensured an ambassador in a strange court was welcomed as the proper embodiment of his master.¹³⁹ The same, in minor key, was true of gifts: they had to equate both to the standing of the ambassador's state, and to the success and/or length of his residence. Most of the necessary thought and organization of this came to be concentrated on the departure present. Even extraordinary embassies bringing sovereign gifts were, by the seventeenth century, offered their reward on leaving, not when

Grummitt (ed.), *The English Experience in France, ca. 1450–1558: War, Diplomacy and Cultural Exchange* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 182.

¹³⁷ Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (London: Penguin, 1965), 201–42. The French had appointed a *conducteur des ambassadeurs* by 1578: *Ceremonies of Charles I*, 20–1.

¹³⁸ Hotman, *The Ambassador*, sig. D7^v–8^r. The sort of practice that Hotman found so dangerous can be seen in the example of a sword given to the Imperial ambassador to England, Eustace Chapuys, in 1535 by Lord Darcy. Chapuys writes to Charles V that this indirectly suggested the time had come 'pour jouer des couteaulx', as indeed Darcy did in rebellion the following year: *LP*, VIII, 1.

¹³⁹ Roosen, 'Early Modern Diplomatic Ceremony', 467–70.

they conveyed their presents. In this the English followed Continental practice, particularly that of the French Court.

From the 1590s onwards we can learn of the levels of gifts not only from official records, but from Finet and from the newsletter writers. Correspondence to and from Dudley Carleton, in particular, is obsessed with ambassadorial reward. We may associate this with the recurring anxiety about proper payment and reward by governments to those who they sent 'to lie abroad', and it was a matter of great personal concern to these royal servants to measure reciprocity precisely. There had always been an attempt by interested individuals to put a sum on royal generosity, and the pressure to do so in international contexts was obvious. Chroniclers might be willing to talk of 'large' and 'magnificent' gifts: courtiers, diplomats, and of course the crown officials who commissioned and managed the gifts, needed to locate this in jewels of a certain calibre, or plate of specific weight.¹⁴⁰ The generosity of a prince, the significance of an embassy, and possibly the personal achievement of an ambassador, could be consigned to gold and silver expressed in monies of account. There was a clear understanding that the representatives of great princes had to be properly rewarded. There was the gift of hospitality, and the promise of venison to residents each summer.¹⁴¹ Plate and gold chains were the stuff of departure gifting and already in the Tudor period there was an expectation that these would be calibrated by status. It must be stressed that the departure gift was costly for the Crown: the Elizabethan gift rolls show that, while a resident ambassador from one of the larger powers might expect 1000 to 2000 ounces of silver gilt, and an important emissary/messenger a gold chain of around 30 ounces, a christening gift to a favoured courtier's child might be silver-gilt weighing 30 to 100 ounces, and a New Year's gift for an earl around twenty silver-gilt ounces.¹⁴²

As the number of settled embassies in London declined in the second half of the sixteenth century, ambassadorial rewards were more often focused on short-term emissaries. Differentiation still applied. An important mission, even from a country such as Scotland, merited the over 300 ounces of plate given to Maitland of Lethington in 1564, but the departing French resident got over 1700 ounces of silver gilt, and a gold bowl that the queen characteristically borrowed from Robert Dudley.¹⁴³ By the mid-1580s the gift rolls show that it was far more common to be rewarding an official messenger of the Dutch States, the Danish, or the Swedes, with quite modest gold chains, rather than to have to lavish great weights of silver gilt upon established ambassadors.

¹⁴⁰ Most of the precise information for the sixteenth century comes from the Jewel House's management of this form of gifting. The price of silver was relatively stable, varying between approximately 5s and 5s 7d an ounce over the period from Elizabeth to the Civil War. Silver-gilt plate, much more relevant for royal exchange, varied from 5s 4d to 6s an ounce in the sixteenth-century Rutland accounts, but could rise to 9s an ounce for specialist work, with rare examples of costs of up to 9s an ounce by the 1630s. Glanville, *Silver in England*, 69.

¹⁴¹ *Ceremonies of Charles I*, 30–2.

¹⁴² Jane A. Lawson (ed.), *The Elizabethan New Year's Gift Exchanges, 1559–1603* (Oxford: British Academy Records of Social and Economic History, NS, 51, 2013).

¹⁴³ Jane A. Lawson (ed.), *The Elizabethan New Year's Gift Exchanges*, 102–3.

The politics of gifts given to subjects of other princes, even those fully accredited, were sensitive. Elizabeth's own representatives sometimes behaved with caution: Hotman praised Sir Amias Paulet, ambassador to France at the beginning of the 1580s, who was said to have accepted his gold chain only when half a league away from Paris, to avoid any taint of corruption. Hotman was aware that some princes guarded against the risk of their representatives 'going native' by taking all departure gifts into the State Treasury on the ambassador's return: Venice routinely did this, so did the Russians.¹⁴⁴ The English had no such fixed policy and it seems that regular gifts of gold and plate were retained by the individual, but sensitivities remained. The unique mantle that Boris Gudonov gave to Sir Richard Lee in 1600 had to be concealed from Elizabeth, who had an eye to the prestige goods brought back by her ambassadors, and under Charles Sir Thomas Roe worried that he would not be able to retain the gift of £2500 worth of copper given him by Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden.¹⁴⁵

Much changed with the advent of James I and peace with Spain. The great expansion of settled missions and also of single visits for treaty negotiation, or congratulation at a royal accession, inevitably increased the cost of rewarding ambassadors: James did the rest by his own excessive generosity. In January 1604 Carleton estimated that the king had already spent £25,000 on presents to ambassadors, many of them sent to welcome his arrival in England.¹⁴⁶ The figure may not be precise, but it gives a powerful sense of the contrast from the previous regime. There was a recognized 'tariff' of a kind for these gifts: for the representatives of France and Spain it was around £1600.¹⁴⁷ In the fevered atmosphere of the early Jacobean Court representatives were not always willing to settle for such a convention. The French ambassador, Beaumont, departing in 1605 after an unsuccessful mission, was given the 2000 ounces of plate, which was becoming the norm, but 'cavilled' for 500 more for which there was precedent, and also begged the king's picture and 'jewells at his owne appointment'.¹⁴⁸

As the need for retrenchment began to take serious hold in Jacobean government the regime belatedly recognized that it had to measure reciprocity, at least for its resident diplomatic corps. In 1615 Monsieur Buisson, the departing French ambassador, became the first to suffer under the king's order that 'since his liberality exceeded that of all other princes' he would now be given only 2000 ounces of plate instead of 4000. One of the next to leave, the Venetian Foscanini, protested vigorously to Finet that he had been reduced to 1000 ounces, as against 2000, to which the response was that he had nevertheless maintained crucial precedence

¹⁴⁴ Hotman, *The Ambassador*, sig. D8^r, K8^r. Hotman disapproved of the Russian practice, arguing that ancient privilege allowed the keeping of rewards by ambassadors.

¹⁴⁵ She did not and it ended instead in the Bodleian: William Dunn Macray, *Annals of the Bodleian Library Oxford, A.D. 1598–1867* (London: Rivingtons, 1868), 309–10. Charles also permitted Roe to retain his gift: Birch, *Court of Charles I*, ii, 143.

¹⁴⁶ *Letters of Dudley Carleton*, 56.

¹⁴⁷ TNA, LC 5/2, 21. Jansson, 'Measured Reciprocity', 364.

¹⁴⁸ *Letters of Chamberlain*, i, 214.

over the ambassadors of the archduke, who had only 800.¹⁴⁹ For a few years it seems that some effort was made to sustain this position, but the depletion of treasure in the Jewel House pushed the Crown further in the direction of substituting jewels for plate in departure gifts. Heavy expenditure on plate declined somewhat after the first decade of James's reign. This led Sir Gilbert Talbot, writing after the Restoration, to allege inaccurately that Charles I 'first made all his presents in jewels and not in plate'.¹⁵⁰

James certainly chose jewels on some occasions, for example a chain to be given to the departing imperial ambassador.¹⁵¹ Like all political decisions of the Jacobean and Caroline regimes, however, this change was easier to articulate than police, and plate continued to be used. Indeed, by the early 1630s, plate was again the routine offering to departing ambassadors.¹⁵² The growing cult of the royal image on medals and in miniatures meant that favoured emissaries and their servants could be given an additional reward showing a measure of personal intimacy with the royal family.¹⁵³ By Charles's reign it had become standard to give the royal medal as well as a gold chain to the departing ambassadorial train.¹⁵⁴ There also remained an upward pressure on the costliness of presents. When the Spanish ambassador left in 1631 he took with him a warm commendation from Charles, and hangings with the story of Hero and Leander valued at £3000, plus chains of gold for his followers. Here the competition of Spanish largesse was the issue; Sir Francis Cottington's followers having been given similar rewards on their departure from Spain.¹⁵⁵

So, did diplomatic gifts matter much in the complex dance of European power relations? This can best be answered by considering the reverse behaviour—a denial or failure of giving. It was sometimes possible to deny gifts to the representative

¹⁴⁹ *Finetti Philoxenis*, 30–1. Charles seems to have adhered to these figures: the 1638 gift roll lists 2005 ounces being given to the Spanish Ambassador, the Condé de Ornate, 1203 ounces to the Venetian, and 1003 ounces to the Dutch: BL, Harl Roll, T2.

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in Collins, *Jewels and Plate of Queen Elizabeth*, 141.

¹⁵¹ Birch, *Court of James the First*, ii, 313. On this occasion James used his discretion to reject the first chain given to the ambassador, saying 'wherein had he deserved so much at his hands?' and settled for one of lesser value. Jewels were less easily converted to money value than plate. James also gave a valuable jewel to the French ambassador extraordinary, Marshal Caderet, in 1621: *CSP Ven*, 1619–21, 546.

¹⁵² *Ceremonies of Charles I*, 37–8, 108. Finet says that it was Sir Henry Mildmay, Master of the Jewels, who argued that there should be a return to plate. There are examples of alternatives chosen either by the king or by the ambassador: the Savoy ambassador in 1631 asked for jewels, as more fashionable than plate and less likely to be purloined by his master, and the French ambassador was given tapestries in 1631.

¹⁵³ Examples include the medals given to members of the Danish royal entourage in 1604, and the Savoyard ambassador's jewel with the king and queen's images 'lively limned' within it: *Ceremonies of Charles I*, 104. Robert Cecil was honoured with a jewel with the French king's picture in it at the end of his 1598 mission: HMC, *Salisbury*, xxiii, 10.

¹⁵⁴ BL, Harl. Roll T2. This was common elsewhere in Europe as well: for example Christina of Sweden had medals minted for subordinate diplomatic figures: Cordula Bischoff, 'Complicated Exchange: the Handling of Authorised and Unauthorised Gifts', *The Court Historian* 14: 2 (2009), 133–48.

¹⁵⁵ Loomie, *Ceremonies of Charles I*, 101. Though, as above, plate which was in short supply was restricted.

of another state without serious international repercussions. In the early sixteenth century James V had to give additional gifts to Patrick Wemyss, his ambassador to France, because he 'got no reward thair'.¹⁵⁶ One of the missions to London from James VI seeking financial aid in 1578 was such a failure that the agents were sent away without any reward.¹⁵⁷ Since James V was eager for French alliance and his grandson would always need to renew his pleas for money they were not in a strong position to react to these affronts. Informal agents could also on occasion be treated with some indifference. One Boutard, who was serving the French king unofficially in London in 1634, so annoyed Henrietta Maria that she told him his reward would be 'to be beaten by a lacquay'.¹⁵⁸ However, to deny benefits to anyone who was properly accredited risked being considered a slight. When the Earl of Moray visited Elizabeth in 1562 he was welcomed, but 'had no present' except license to export horses to Scotland.¹⁵⁹ The failure of royal generosity in this case might have implied doubts about the policy of sustaining Protestant interests in Scotland and so Robert Dudley, as Elizabeth's Master of the Horse, seems to have stepped in to cover this gap, while Cecil's personal gift of a gold chain to James Melville in 1564 seems designed to excuse a failure of Elizabeth's promise of a jewel for his mistress.¹⁶⁰

Refusal of a gift is more interesting, since it indicated explicit criticism of the sovereign donor. Bunychausen, sent by the princes of the Protestant Union on a desperate mission to seek English help for Bohemia in 1620, did his best to decline a gift after he had failed to persuade the king to act. James, however, felt in honour bound to compel him to accept.¹⁶¹ The most striking case is that of Henry Oxenstierna, sent to negotiate support for the Swedes in 1634, who was so angered at the failure of his mission that he refused the selected plate because 'the bestowing of a present by a prince, and the receiving of it by an ambassador being, as he understood it, a testimony of both their satisfactions' and he had not given this. Anger was certainly here, but also a paradoxical measured reciprocity, because Sir Henry Vane had not been offered any gift on his mission to Gustavus Adolphus.¹⁶² In some circumstances envoys were even less likely to want gifts: when the Dutch States-General sent ambassadors to England in 1649 to condole with Charles's children on their loss, they contrived to leave before the gifts that Parliament had prepared for them could be presented.¹⁶³ These were peculiarly awkward circumstances: but the Dutch already had a reputation for refusing gifts that the English found frankly mystifying. When Ralph Winwood and Thomas Edmunds were involved in negotiations about the Twelve Year Truce in 1609 they accepted their gifts of plate from the Spanish

¹⁵⁶ *TA*, v, 330.

¹⁵⁷ *CSP For*, 1578-9, 117-8. Francis Cottington, departing Spain after an unsuccessful mission in 1611 thought that he was being slighted because no departure gift was given, but the present of a gold chain caught up with him as he was half-way to the Pyrenees: *TNA*, SP 94/18/155-6.

¹⁵⁸ *Ceremonies of Charles I*, 147-8.

¹⁵⁹ *BL*, Add. MS. 35831, fo. 32'.

¹⁶⁰ *BL*, Add. MS. 35125, fo. 10'. *Memoirs of Melvil*, 97, 102.

¹⁶¹ *CSP Ven*, 1619-21, 220, 229.

¹⁶² *Ceremonies of Charles I*, 158-9.

¹⁶³ *CSP Ven*, 1647-52, 91.

with equanimity, but were dismayed that their Dutch counterparts were not allowed to do so. The English, and indeed the French who were with them, saw the attitude of the States General as folly, since the gifts were a crucial acknowledgement 'that they are a free stat, princes not being accustomed to send presents to the subiects'.¹⁶⁴

CONCLUSION TO SOVEREIGN GIFTS

The century and a half between the Italian wars and Treaty of Westphalia saw European conflicts driven by dynasticism and religious discord, with scarcely any caesura of peace. In this environment the rituals of diplomacy, and indeed the ceremoniousness of engagement between sovereigns, often seems little more than fig leaves covering bleak aggression. The evolution of regular, more informed and disciplined encounters between states, was one of the few positive outcomes of this difficult period. In structuring ambassadorial exchanges proper forms of ceremony remained important, and to them was added an emphasis on precedence and on the integration of residents into the life of the princely Court that pointed towards the idea of an ambassadorial corps. Although the English monarchy had long periods of withdrawal from direct military engagement on the Continent, it largely followed the lead of the French and Spanish in the management of matters diplomatic.

To look at English international engagement through the prism of gift-giving is of course to restrict our gaze. As we have seen, much giving was either integrated into the wider ceremonial encounters between sovereigns, or was structured as a part of reward for diplomats. However, changes in the culture of gifting do reflect the broader shifts in the management of relations between states, and also the specific attitudes of the English Crown. Thus the Continental ambitions of Henry VIII are obviously made visible in the lavish exchanges with Francis I in the first twenty years of his reign when magnificence was an explicit tool of foreign policy. To this must be added Henry's pleasure in his standing as equal with the French king and the emperor, which is displayed in his giving and receiving of horses, hawks, hounds, and pictures. James V's desire to show his standing in this monarchical 'club' was also shown in his proffering of gifts and the enthusiasm with which he received them from Henry and Francis. Yet even in these years there was change: the crisis of the 1530s, and especially the realignment of politics

¹⁶⁴ BL, Stowe MS. 171, fos. 72^r, 79^r–80^v: quotation at 80^r. Refusal of ordinary ambassadorial gifts was common for the Dutch: in 1656 their representatives told the States General that they had refused 'the usual gifts' from the Council of Danzig; Thomas Birch (ed.), *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe*, 7 vols. (London: Fletcher Gyles et al., 1742), v, 574. The English had less experience of refusal: in the Restoration period the embassy to Russia was poorly led by the Earl of Carlisle and insulted the Russians by returning gifts. The result was diplomatic disaster: Guy de Miège, *A Relation of Three Embassies from... Charles II... to Muscovie, Sweden and Denmark, 1663–4* (London: John Starkey, 1669).

after 1537 as Francis drew closer to the emperor, curtailed the flow of monarchical largesse.¹⁶⁵

Later Tudor policies towards the Continent were never so dominated by honour claimed through display and generosity. Here the attitude to gifts given and received underlines the significance of context. There were specific moments when a heightened value was attributed to exchange: under Mary at the time of the Spanish match, under Elizabeth when Anjou came a-wooing. These were occasions at which the domestic audience was as important as international reputation: courtiers were to know, and to report on, the flow of generosity. Elizabeth in particular cultivated the idea of intimacy in public—associating herself with images of other monarchs and encouraging the dissemination of her image through her own ambassadors. Her more private and political gifting of a subsidy articulated as gratuity to her Scottish ‘brother’ was deliberately detached from any of the visible rituals of the Court: a matter of state for a few eyes only.¹⁶⁶ Beyond this money was saved because, as Nicholas Bacon assured the 1571 Parliament, she had turned ‘the pompes and solempe ambassadors of charge into such as be voide of excesse and yet honorable and comely’.¹⁶⁷

It was under James that the dramatic shift in foreign policy placed gift-exchange at the heart of his claim to European-wide status. Charles’s instincts remained those of his father, though his resources constrained him to withdraw from the most ostentatious parts of his father’s giving. Instead we have, in Finet’s account, a monarch who performed before foreign embassies with great effectiveness within his own Court. What did not change in these centuries was the value attached to symbolic signals of royal attitudes, and gifts, whether given rarely or with great abandon, were still one of the important signifiers of political interests. Sovereign gifts were a necessary, but certainly not sufficient, tool of international diplomacy. They provided reward for servants of other rulers, and spoke with varying degrees of integrity, of friendship, alliance, and shared status. They affirmed the honourable standing of both parties to the exchange. How important they were must be judged by the significance of honour in transnational communications. Were rulers and their advisors, like Falstaff, seeing honour as an empty word? The effort and investment in performing generosity would question this. Giving could be a proxy form of aggression, or of the shared qualities above: but like diplomacy itself it could become a worthy alternative to the destructive force of warfare.

Even diplomatic practice developed in an irregular manner: for example, the relative isolation of the English from the middle of Elizabeth’s reign, and the conflict with Spain, reduced the level of regular missions and hence the organization

¹⁶⁵ MacMahon, ‘Courtesy and Conflict’, 197–8, stresses the change in tone of the French Court in Francis’s later years, attributing it to changed political priorities, but also to the declining sense of intimacy and social ease as Francis aged.

¹⁶⁶ Goodare, ‘James VI’s English Subsidy’, in Goodare and Lynch, *The Reign of James VI*, 110–25. We can think of a reward such as that given by Edward VI to Calvin as having this public quality, though here the recipient is surely most important, as the reformer received a clear signal of English support for his work.

¹⁶⁷ T. E. Hartley (ed.), *Proceedings in the Parliaments of Elizabeth I*, vol 1: 1558–1581, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1981), 186.

of conventions to manage an ambassadorial corps. Practice had hardened by the beginning of the seventeenth century, and the idea of the gift as reflecting the satisfaction of a ruler with those sent to communicate with him, had lost any element of spontaneity. When Sir Charles Cotterell, Charles II's Master of Ceremonies, thought about the practice of his predecessors, it seemed natural for him to record the tariff of departure presents and the cost they had represented for the Crown in the past fifty years.¹⁶⁸ We might contrast this with the shower of gifts given after successful diplomacy in Henry VIII's reign. Royal pleasure or displeasure could still be registered through gifts: now the norm was for ambassadors to be caught up in the web of expected reciprocity, with all its fees and counter-gifts, and a clear overall fixity of reward. The ambassadorial gift had become assimilated into the institutional structure of the Court.

¹⁶⁸ TNA, LC/ 5/2, 21–3. Cotterell showed that overall costs for each embassy had not increased, some inflation in giving being compensated for by savings on reception of ambassadors—at Gravesend not Dover—and on diet.

7

Bribes and Benefits

GIFTS AND POISON

Marcel Mauss pointed out that in the ancient Germanic languages the word *gift* doubles as both gift and poison.¹ The present can be fateful to its possessor: the Rhine gold destroys the one to whom it gives itself; Midas's wish for a golden touch is rewarded in a lethal manner. The gift can be a curse, either through the tricks that the gods play upon the greedy and ambitious, or through the hostility and aggression of the donors. Greeks bring false gifts: fairy godmothers not invited to christening feasting curse the child in its cradle; closer to early modern home witches are accused of *maleficium*, the gift of evil-doing against those who have denied them the offering of alms.² The head of the witch-clan of Knaresborough Forest was said to exercise so much power over even wealthy neighbours, that out of fear of such an outcome 'unbesought they provided her with fire, and meat from their own tables'.³ Or the witch could gift poison herself: in the fraught political environment of 1533 one Mistress Amadas was accused of 'setting a candle before the Devil' by planning to give the king, Anne Boleyn, the Duke of Norfolk, and Cromwell poisonous New Year's gifts.⁴ All of this opens windows upon men's deepest fears of being the plaything of the gods and of the malevolent forces beyond individual control, but it also shows a more profound side of anxieties about giving than those discussed thus far. The gift is psychologically burdensome because it must be offered correctly and must be sought and accepted in a true and disinterested spirit.

¹ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970), 62. See also Jonathan Parry, 'On the Moral Perils of Exchange', in Marcel Mauss and Maurice Bloch (eds.), *Money and the Morality of Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 64–93; Aafke E. Komter, *Social Solidarity and the Gift* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 48–53.

² There is a large literature on witch accusations and guilt transference. For a useful summary see Jonathan Barry, 'Introduction: Keith Thomas and the Problem of Witchcraft', in Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester, and Gareth Roberts (eds.), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), esp. 8–9.

³ Quoted in Clive Holmes, 'Women, Witnesses and Witches', *PP* 140 (1993), 52.

⁴ *LP*, VI, 923.

Although it is through the medium of witchcraft accusation that the gift as poison most obviously impinges upon the early modern record, there are many more ways in which the spirit of giving could be corroded. Gifts were perilous because they could be *mis-taken* at every level: cycles of resentment, insult, feud, and strife could result from the giving of too little, or giving inappropriately. The giver could heap shame upon the recipient either inadvertently or consciously.⁵ Sir Thomas Elyot, reflecting on the danger of inadvertent insult, called good advice ‘a poison’. If the recipient sucked it in and turned it to bitterness, he could later choose to destroy the liberal giver of the counsel.⁶

Then there is the deliberate use of a material offering as insult. In an honour-based society the presentation of things as well as words was one possible route to conflict. The gage thrown down as a challenge gift is the most common example. It is a pledge that is also an aggressive offering: ‘there take my gage’, says a character in Fairfax’s translation of Tasso’s *Godfrey of Bulloigne*, ‘behold I offer it to him who first accus’d me in this cause’.⁷ The gift as insult is powerfully exemplified by the offering of tennis balls to Henry V. In Shakespeare’s version of a tale that is told by the chroniclers from Thomas Elmham onwards, the Dauphin’s ambassadors offer the young king a ‘tun of treasure’ which are ‘meeter for your spirit’ than the authority he claimed across the Channel. The insult allows Henry to present an elaborate metaphor in response:

When we have matched our rackets to these balls,
We will in France by God’s grace, play a set
Shall strike his father’s crown into the hazard.⁸

This was insult dramatized. We have already seen how watchful Eustace Chapuys was for the possible insults embedded in the New Year’s exchanges, and ambassadors’ insistence that they be accorded gifts proper to the status of their masters. More commonly in the real world of exchange, hostility was barely concealed by deficient forms of giving. The University of Paris welcomed Princess Mary as bride of Louis XII in 1514 with an oration that explicitly ruled out the usual gifts of gold and silver, simply promising prayers and service to the sister of a recent enemy.⁹ This is also a part of the reason why untold generations of Shakespeare scholars have worried about the second-best bed left to the playwright’s wife.

⁵ Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving: Informal Support and Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 275–305.

⁶ Thomas Elyot, *Of the Knowledge Which Maketh a Wise Man*, ed. Edwin Johnston Howard, (Oxford: Anchor Press, 1946), 5.

⁷ Torquato Tasso, *Godfrey of Bulloigne or the Recoverie of Jerusalem*, trans. Edward Fairfax (London: Ar. Hatfield for I. Jaggard and M. Lownes, 1600), Bk v, v. 58.

⁸ Edward Hall, *The Union of the Two noble and illustre families of Lancastre and Yorke....Henry V* (London: Richard Grafton, 1550), fo. xli. *Henry V*, 1: 2, ll. 253–64.

⁹ Charles Giry-Delaisson, “Une Haquencé...pour le Porter Bientost et plus Doucement en Enfer ou en Paradis”: the French and Mary Tudor’s Marriage to Louis XII in 1514’, in David Grummitt (ed.), *The English Experience in France, ca 1450–1558: War, Diplomacy and Cultural Exchange* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 149–50.

The corrupt gift was poisonous in another sense: it left both the giver and the receiver with unclean hands. Again and again in contemporary literature the honest gift is associated with open and clean palms, the bribe with its antithesis. And from the hands the poison of corruption entered the hearts and minds of the participants. This is powerfully expressed in a 1632 translation of Juan de Santa Maria's *Policie Unveiled*. The author notes sarcastically 'to receive is a sweete thing, and leaves the hand so savory, and so well seasoned, that it hath no sooner received one gift, but it is presently ready for another, a third, a fourth and so in *infinitum*'. The effect, particularly on the recipient, was loathsome: 'it is an incurable disease, a contagious corruption, which like a leprosie goes from one to another, and clingeth close to the soule'.¹⁰ This is an unusually powerful ethical statement, though it provides a reminder that the more pragmatic efforts to define the proper political and judicial parameters of exchange needed to be underpinned by a concern for the impact of corruption on the individual. No power structure is immune to the dangers of bribes and douceurs given in exchange for anticipated advantage, but that of early modern England might be argued to have been particularly vulnerable.¹¹ The growth in the power of the State, especially in its *ancien régime* form with its focus upon the Court and on the person of the monarch, increased both the opportunities and the attractiveness of competitive graft. The structural upheavals of the Reformation also left an unusually large swathe of ecclesiastical wealth and patronage open to lay ambitions. At the heart of the political system a succession of proto-first ministers, Wolsey, Cromwell, William Cecil, and his son, the Duke of Buckingham, the earls of Clarendon, and Danby, exercised opportunities for patronage and its manipulation that were modulated only by their relationship with the monarch and the financial limitations of royal largesse.¹² These are the circumstances in which the quest for royal benevolence quickly turned sour, either through the thwarting of too many suitors, or the visible excess of the men of power.

This is to suggest that an understanding of gifts gone wrong should start from a consideration of the structures of Tudor and Stuart power. While contemporaries were always happy to point the finger of blame at the Court when vice was at issue,

¹⁰ Juan de Santa Maria, *Policie Unveiled Wherein may be Learned, the Order of True Policie in Kingdomes and Common-Wealths*, trans. James Mabbe (London: Thomas Harper for Richard Collins, 1632), 86.

¹¹ The most important guide to this topic remains John T. Noonan, *Bribes*, (New York: Macmillan, 1984), 313 ff. His analysis of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English behaviour rests heavily on a limited number of literary sources, but argues persuasively that these demonstrate the broader worries about corruption in the society.

¹² See Joel Hurstfield, *Freedom, Corruption and Government in Elizabethan England* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973); Joel Hurstfield, *The Queen's Wards* (London: Longmans Green, 1958); Linda Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England*, (London: Routledge, 1990). Also Peck, 'Benefits, Brokers and Beneficiaries: the Culture of Exchange in Seventeenth-Century England', in Bonnelyn Y. Kunze and Dwight D. Brauntigan (eds.), *Court, Country and Culture* (Rochester, NY: Rochester University Press, 1992), 109–27; and David Harris Sacks, 'The Countervailing of Benefits: Monopoly, Liberty and Benevolence in Elizabethan England', in Dale Hoak (ed.), *Tudor Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 272–91.

they approached the problem of wrong-doing in this territory with far greater subtlety and an awareness of the difficulties of labelling social behaviour. The first part of this chapter therefore discusses the language through which writers tried to clarify their moral positions on bribery.¹³ The point at which gifts became corrupt, and the threat of legal action or disgrace that might follow, is often difficult to establish, but careful reading of texts can provide much insight into the expectations of contemporaries.¹⁴ Only then can the actual process of exchanging favours and benefits be evaluated effectively.

The English language seems, from an early date, to be impressively endowed with words to describe forms of giving and largesse that had questionable moral connotations. Among those not only available, but regularly used from at least the fifteenth century onwards, were 'presents', 'rewards', 'benefits', 'meed' and, of course, 'bribes'. The only pertinent piece of language added in the sixteenth century was 'gratuity', first noted by *Oxford English Dictionary* as used in the 1520s and settling to its modern meaning later in the century. Historians of Continental gift-systems are often impressed by the fact that English evolved so early a special term for the gift or exchange that was inherently corrupt, pointing out that French and German lack this linguistic specificity.¹⁵ It is true that the term bribery was used from at least the fourteenth century, but it is not employed in the sense relevant for our purposes until the time of Lydgate, and its later history suggests that we need to be cautious about attributing some unusual level of moral nicety to the English in this period.

THE LANGUAGE OF JUDICIAL CORRUPTION

The clearest linguistic descent for the use of specific accusations of bribery is via the law. And throughout the later medieval and early modern eras one of the most visible worries about corrupting gifts is that they affected the actions of judges and

¹³ Linda Levy Peck, in her seminal work on patronage and corruption, recognized the importance of starting and finishing with language, and with the interweaving of the ways in which contemporaries represented these concepts: *Court Patronage*, 12–29, 185–207.

¹⁴ For this reason, the conclusions drawn by Hurstfield about the problems of studying corruption seem unduly bleak: 'Political Corruption in Modern England: the Historian's Problem', in his *Freedom, Corruption and Government*, 137–62. It is important, of course, not to assume too close a normative connection between language choice and the values underpinning it. Language takes meaning primarily from the immediate context in which actors choose to acknowledge and employ it. Moreover this is an age of rhetorical sophistication, and the linguistic techniques adopted by theorists and moralists involved many persuasive devices. See, for example, the extensive use of paradiastole, the renaming of concepts by their opposite, or neighbouring qualities: Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), i, 180–7.

¹⁵ Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in 16th Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 147–8; Valentin Groebner, *Liquid Assets, Dangerous Gifts: Presents and Politics at the End of the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 71–5. French uses *dons* as the common language of gifts and bribes, while in German *miet* is used both for bribes and gifts, though there is a growing linguistic separation as this takes on more illicit meanings, leaving *gift* as the affirmative term.

magistrates, perverting the course of justice. Long before the appropriate language was in place the Crown, on the one hand, and moralists, on the other, had worried about the giving of gifts to judges. The Provisions of Oxford (1258) had insisted that the chief justiciar 'take nothing unless it be presents of bread and wine, and such things, to wit food and drink, as have been used to be brought to the tables of great men'.¹⁶ Throughout the later thirteenth century there were restrictions on judicial conduct, and under 20 Edward III, c.1 all judges had to swear not to take gifts or rewards from any man, beyond the value of meat and drink.¹⁷ There were those, like Sir John Fortescue, Chief Justice of King's Bench from 1442 to 1461, who insisted, somewhat unconvincingly, that it had never been known for senior judges to take *donis aut muneribus*. Other commentators in this period, thinking legal corruption might indeed be a problem, used the Latin term *munera*: in English the favoured late medieval term was meed. William Langland's Lady Mede is a brilliant personation of the corrosive dimensions of the gifts and presents of a reciprocal society, especially its wholly negative influence on justice. In passus III of *Piers Plowman* justices are described as the chief beneficiaries of Lady Mede, being given

Coupes of clene gold [and] coppes of sylver
Rynges with rubes and othere riche geftes...

And later in the text Conscience tells the king: 'By Jesu! With here Ieweles the Iustices she shendeth [corrupts].'¹⁸ Fabyan's *Chronicle*, compiled in the late fifteenth century, relates the story of Cambyeses, King of Syria, who flayed an unrighteous judge, and glosses this with the sardonic observation that, since this punishment had never been inflicted in more recent times, judges must have 'holde theyr handes from all medes and rewardes'.¹⁹

It may have been John Lydgate who provided the English term with which to name and shame the gift-taking of the judiciary. In his *Fall of Princes* he commented on the abuse of gifts in conventional terms:

A juge shulde of equite despise
To take gyftes of any maner wight

¹⁶ William Stubbs, *Select Charters and Other Illustrations of English Constitutional History*, ed. H. W. C. Davis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), 386.

¹⁷ Wilfrid Prest, 'Judicial Corruption in Early Modern England', *PP* 133 (1991), 71. This discussion is indebted to Prest's careful analysis of the behaviour of judges in the central courts.

¹⁸ G. Russell and G. Kane (eds.), *Piers Plowman: the C Version* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), passus III: ll. 22–4, 194. John A. Burrow, 'Lady Meed and the Power of Money', *Medium Aevum* 74: 1 (2005), 116–17.

¹⁹ *Fabyans Cronycle Newly Printed, with the Cronycle, Actes and Dedes Done in the Tyme of the Reygne of the Moste Excellent Prynce Kynge Henry the VII* (London: William Rastell, 1533), fo. 119r. 'Mede' was still being used intermittently to indicate corrupt or doubtful rewards as late as the early decades of Elizabeth's reign. Often it appears in works of poetry, such as the *Mirror for Magistrates*. It is tempting to suggest that this is because it fitted rhythmic structure better than most of its synonyms except gifts. The story of the corrupt judge, Sisamnes, flayed at the order of Cambyeses, appears commonly in medieval sets of *exempla*, and was also represented in vivid visual form on a number of occasions, most notably by Gerard David in Bruges town hall. For a more extended discussion see Groebner, *Liquid Assets*, 78–82.

And ready be all wronges to chastise
 From all giftes turne away his sight
 His handys ay ware for friendship hate or drede
 That trouth be nat oppressed with mede.²⁰

But earlier in the same passage he had denounced the tyranny of Apius, with the claim that the judges 'the gylty spare/ Favoure wronge for brybes and for mede'. Yet neither the older, nor the newer term for legal corruption seems to have become very prevalent before the sixteenth century. More than a century after Lydgate wrote, Sir Thomas Elyot in his *Banket of Sapience* denounced the same type of judicial abuse quoting a series of proverbial sentiments about judges: 'presents and gifts make blind judges'; 'all doe love presentes and follow rewardes'; 'take thou no gyftes, which do make wyse men blynde'.²¹ What is interesting here is that Elyot's terms—presents, gifts, rewards—were not necessarily perjorative. His language connects with that used for the reciprocal structures of late medieval society and the context is left to determine the propriety of the particular exchange.

Elyot seems more typical of fifteenth- and early-sixteenth-century commentators on the law than does Lydgate. It is not clear that writers on this subject wanted to demonstrate that judges routinely falsified their judgements in return for lucre and benefits. The prevailing mood in much of the commentary is that judges endangered themselves, and hence justice, by their willingness to accept presents, thereby leading to *expectations* about how they would resolve a case. Presents as the term for things given apparently outside the case to be judged, and rewards as thanks of grateful suitors after judgement might, if conveyed in a public forum, be acceptable.

In the years after Elyot had written, both an enlargement and a shift in the language of condemnation of legal abuse began to occur. Katherine Parr, in her *Lamentation of a Sinner* (1546), spoke of a judge not corrupted by 'affection, bribes or rewards'; Thomas Becon, in his prayer for the judges in *The Flour of Godly Praiers* (1550), uses the customary images of the need to avoid gifts, but sharpens this with the addition of bribes. Judges are to 'have no respect of personnes, nether to be desirus of gifts . . . nor yet geve sentence with the ungodly for bribes'.²² John Christopherson, the Marian Bishop of Chichester, writing against rebellion after Wyatt's Rising, talks of there being 'much bribery and takinge of rewardes' in the judicial process.²³ From this period onwards the language of bribery becomes more common in commentaries on justice as one aspect of the moralization of political discourse. In an example that can stand for many, Thomas Lupton in *Siugila too*

²⁰ Here Begynneth the Boke Calledde [sic.] John Bochas Describinge the Falle of Princis . . . Translated into English by John Ludgate Monke of the Monastery of Seint Edmundes Bury (London: Richard Pynson, 1494), sig. l vii^r and v.

²¹ Thomas Elyot, *The Banket of Sapience* (London: Henry Wykes, 1564), fo. 29^r.

²² Thomas Becon, *The Flour of Godly Praiers* (London: John Day, 1550), fo. xvii^r.

²³ 'The Lamentation or Complaint of a Sinner', in Thomas Bentley, *The Monument of Matrons Containing Seven Severall Lamps of Virginitie* (London: Thomas Dawson for assignees of William Seres, 1582), 79. John Christopherson, *An Exhortation to All Menne to Take Hede and Beware of Rebellion* (London: John Cawood, 1554), sig. Piv^r.

good to be true (1580) uses the dramatized description of his Utopian Mauqsun to foreground the language of bribes when talking of his righteous judge who humiliates a corrupt suitor. The judge translates *munera pervertunt justiciam* as 'Gyftes do pervert justice', but in his oration against corruption he speaks more bluntly:

Whosoever giveth any bribe or gifts; to any Judge, or to any other, on the part and behalf of any, whose matter or cause doeth depende, or after to depend before the said Judge: the same bribe or gifte is lawfully his that firste reveales it.

In the narrative, it is the judge himself that has revealed the bribe, so Lupton goes on to underline the moral importance of clean hands for the judge, who is represented as giving the gold of the suitor to the nearest needy families.²⁴

Shorn of its dramatized context, this becomes the standard discourse, or moralized warning, to judges and other lawyers. For example, William Vaughan in his *The Golden-Grove Moralized* (1600) does not any longer allow those he admonishes to manipulate the language of gifting. Judges are 'not to be corrupted with bribes and extortion', or to be 'greased in the fist with the oyle of gold'; most vividly they are to 'wash [their] hands cleane from bribes'.²⁵ And Vaughan's sense of the prevalence of these practices among those engaged in litigation is conveyed in his succinct chapter headings: 'Of bribes, and going to law'.²⁶ Vaughan also shows an awareness of the importance of careful discrimination in the use of language, even in relation to the law. His chapter on magistrates asks whether they may receive the 'presents' sent to them. His answer is that no gifts should be taken 'unlesse they be to be eaten and drunke up within three dayes at the furthest: and that not of suters, for they give them to the intent they may corrupt their authority, and so speed of their owne pleas and pursuits'.²⁷

Seventeenth-century rhetoric on the probity of the legal profession follows this hardening of language in the previous decades, with that apparently incorruptible judge Sir Edward Coke leading the charge. In his *Institutes* he devoted a full chapter to the 'great misprison' of bribery and insisted that only the merest gift of meat and drink could be exempted from the taint of corruption.²⁸ When he came to charge the justices at the Norwich Assize in 1606 he would not even countenance such slight linguistic slippage:

Partialitie in a Judge is a Turpitude, which doth soyle and stayne all the Actions done by him. A Judge that will bee Partiall, will receive a Bribe, and such an one cannot by any meanes be just, in his manner of Judging. Brybes and Partiall dealing dooth defile the Puritie of Justice.²⁹

²⁴ Thomas Lupton, *Siugila Too Good to be True... Herein is Shewed by Way of Dialogue, the Wonderful Maners of the People of Mauqsun* (London: Henry Bynneman, 1580), 113.

²⁵ William Vaughan, *The Golden-Grove Moralized in Three Bookes: a Worke Very Necessary for All Such, as Would Know How to Governe Themselves, Their Houses, or Their Countrey* (London: Simon Stafford, 1600), sig. V 1^r.

²⁶ William Vaughan, *The Golden-Grove Moralized in three Bookes*, sig. V 1 'and v'.

²⁷ William Vaughan, *The Golden-Grove Moralized in three Bookes*, sig. V 4^r.

²⁸ Edward Coke, *The Third Part of the Institutes of the Laws of England* (London: M. Flesher for W. Lee, 1644), 145–9. It is interesting that Coke resolutely confines the language of bribery to the law, both secular and ecclesiastical, while using extortion when talking about politics.

²⁹ Robert Pricket, *The Lord Coke, his Speech and Charge at the Assises Houlden in Norwich, the Fourth of August, 1606* (London: R. Raworth and N. Okes, 1607), sig. c. iii^r.

Assize and Inns of Court sermons, commonly printed in the first half of the century, reprised the theme *ad nauseam*, urging that judges should be no respecter of persons.

While the term 'gift' might occasionally creep into the preacher's discourse the general determination was to call a spade by its name. Typical are two sermons by Thomas Gataker at Sergeants' Inn in 1620 in which the judges were warned not to be 'seduced and led aside by favour, or corrupted with gifts'. Then Gataker steadily constructed a picture in which the accurate language of bribes feature prominently: there must be no respect of persons 'nor accepting of bribes'.³⁰ The preachers were still in full voice on the subject after the Restoration: Thomas Stephens, preaching at the Bury Assizes in 1661 pointed out, with a wealth of scriptural citation, that judges, like Samuel must shake their hands 'from holding of bribes', lest the vipers who would sting their hands also blinded their eyes.³¹ Their lordships sometimes grew weary of such hectoring—Justice Harvey complaining on one occasion: 'it seems by the sermon that we are corrupt, but know we can use conscience in our places as well as the best clergyman of all'.³² But after the spectacular fall of Lord Chancellor Bacon in 1621 it behoved the common law judges to be equally blunt in using the language of bribes to condemn both attempts to prejudice judicial outcomes and the wider dangers of corruption associated with the sale of office.³³ That they did not always succeed in convincing contemporaries of the rectitude of all lawyers might be attributed, as the lawyer Sir Anthony Benn observed, more to 'evil men that pervert and abuse them' than to the Bench itself.³⁴

BRIBERY IN POLITICS AND LAW

While the language of bribery as a clear challenge to the covert taking of gifts to assure unjust outcomes became firmly established in commentary on the law in the second half of the sixteenth century, its emergence seems to have owed less

³⁰ Thomas Gataker, *God's Parley with Princes with an Appeale from Them to Him* (London: E. Griffin, 1620), 65–6, 73, 77. See also Samuel Burton, *A Sermon Preached at the Generall Assises in Warwicke* (London: W. Stansby for N. Butter, 1620); Thomas Pestell, *Morbus Epidemicus, or the Churles Sicknesse* (London: T. Creede for A. Johnson, 1615), 21–2.

³¹ Thomas Stephens, *Ad Magistratum: Three Sermons Preached Before the Justices of Assize at Bury St. Edmunds* (Cambridge: 1661), 111.

³² *The Diary of John Rous*, ed. M. A. E. Green (London: Camden Society, os 66, 1856), 62; quoted in J. S. Cockburn, *A History of English Assizes 1558–1714* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 66.

³³ Prest, 'Judicial Corruption', 80–1; Prest, *The Rise of the Barristers: a Social History of the English Bar, 1590–1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 309–10. The prerogative courts also exercised caution. In 1638 Sir Richard Wiseman accused the Lord Keeper Coventry of corruption after the dismissal of his Star Chamber case. Wiseman had indeed given him a ewer and basin, as well, he claimed as £220—but it was said as a New Year's gift since no suit was pending. The money was claimed not to have been given. Wiseman's suit was thrown out and he was subject to harsh penalties: *CSPD*, 1637–38, 491.

³⁴ From Benn's 'Essays' (Bedfordshire Record Office, Wrest Papers, L28/46): quoted by Prest, *The Rise of the Barristers*, 311.

to the attitudes of lawyers and their critics than to wider changes in religious and political discourse. Again, the negative connotation of the term bribe had long been linguistically available. A few of the earliest known usages were explicitly political. Jack Cade's proclamation to the Kentish rebels in 1450, as recorded in John Stow's memoranda, twice denounced the king's evil advisors for taking bribes to give access to Henry VI and to allow suitors to pursue their rights to land and property. Cade's language, if indeed it is his, admits no compromise with such concepts as gifts or presents.³⁵ Lydgate had already opened this specific linguistic possibility when he referred to political bribery in his translation of Guido delle Colonne's *Life and Death of Hector*.³⁶ However, the usual disposition, which prevailed well into the sixteenth century, was for authors to use the language of presents or gifts, for things offered in hope of gain, reward, and for benefits accepted for services rendered. Since the moral prohibitions on taking reward for political action were so much weaker than those associated with the dispensing of justice, many of these exchanges did not, in the view of contemporaries, require any linguistic redescription. The context would reveal whether an action had probity or not. Elyot can once again stand as example: in his *Image of Governance* he describes the denunciation of Turinius by the Emperor Septimus Severus. This false counsellor promised all things to all men, assuring 'every man a parte he wolde promyse his favour, and therefore [he] received great rewardes or presentes'.³⁷ Alexander Barclay, in his translation of Sallust on Jugurtha was almost consistent in using the term 'rewards' to apply to political benefits, with positive and negative contexts being equally common.³⁸ Edward Hall's *Chronicle* follows the same pattern: his dubious politicians and counsellors seek, or receive, rewards, while the term 'bribes' is confined to a context similar to the one already encountered, a charge against Henry VI's Duke of Suffolk.³⁹

Increasing access to classical history and political discourse in the first half of the sixteenth century served to encourage a more nuanced use of the language of benefits, both positively and negatively. Alexander Barclay may have privileged the term 'rewards' in translating Sallust, but he recognized that his source was referring quite directly to illicit and covert gifts, and employed 'bribes' to articulate this on several occasions. In a particularly interesting passage, on Jugurtha seeking favour of important Romans, he describes how 'some were so induced by gyftes received: and some other by hope of brybes in tyme

³⁵ James Gairdner (ed.), *Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles: with Historical Memoranda by John Stowe* (London: Camden Society ns. 28, 1880), 95.

³⁶ John Lydgate, *The Life and Death of Hector One, and the First of the Most Puissant Valiant and Renowned Monarchies of the World, Called the Nyne Worthies* (London: Thomas Purfoot, 1614), 262.

³⁷ Thomas Elyot, *The Image of Governance... of the Right Noble Emperor Alexandre Severus* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1541), fo. 26'.

³⁸ *Here Begynneth the Famous Cronycle of the Warre which the Romayns had Agaynst Iugurth ... Translated into Englysshe by Syr Alexander Barclay* (London: Richard Pynson, 1525), fo. xxiv'.

³⁹ Hall, *Union... of Lancastre and York... Henry VI*, fo. 148'.

to come' that they urged others to support him.⁴⁰ Elyot's only use of the term comes from the story of Turinius already mentioned: rewards and presents feature in the main narrative, but this at the point at which the emperor speaks against corruption. 'To whome,' asks the emperor, 'is extorcion or brybes not grevous? Although the giver receyveth great lucre. Is there any thing to be more abhorred than sellynge of lustyce?'⁴¹

As generations of Englishmen became familiar through school and university with the works of Cicero, especially *De officiis* and the *Epistle to Quintus*, they encountered a new moral language concerning corruption, and a sharp critique of those who called bribes by any euphemistic terms.⁴² A key part of Cicero's advice to his brother on his departure to be proconsul of Asia was that he must appear as an enemy of bribes: 'to them which take bribes, but also to them that give bribes if thou know it'.⁴³ Thomas North, translating Plutarch's *Lives* in 1579, presented his portrait of Cicero as one who refused all gifts when he was in office although at that time 'to take bribes was reckoned no shame, but to handle it discreetly'.⁴⁴ Classical sources gave a tough political context to the quest for illicit benefits, describing how the process of corrupting officials and judges happened in Rome.

The most accessible language concerning bribery was to be found in the key textual site for Reformation Englishmen: the vernacular scriptures.⁴⁵ There are a number of Old Testament passages in which the deficient behaviour of the people of Israel in relation to government and justice is assailed, and psalmists and prophets warn of the consequences of graft and greed. But the terms in which they do so remain mixed in the early translations. In the Tyndale/Coverdale version of Exodus 23:8 the word bribe is used, but only in the marginal note explaining the command, 'Thou shalt take no gyftes, for gyftes blind the prudent and perverte the wordes of the righteous'. It appears once again in Ecclesiasticus 40:12 where 'al brybes and unrighteousness' are to be put away. However, the more common term is that found of I Samuel 8:3 in which Samuel's sons turned aside after lucre and took 'rewardes'; in Psalm 15 where the righteous man 'taketh no reward agaynst the innocent', and in Amos 5:12 where the wicked judges were accused of taking 'rewardes' to 'oppress the poore in judgemente'. When an alternative to rewards seemed necessary, Coverdale usually supplied 'gift'. In Job 15:34 he has the prophet threatening that fire will consume the houses of those 'gredy to receyve gyftes' and Psalm 26:10 denounces those whose 'ryght hand is ful of gyftes'. Later translations begin to move towards more explicit language for tainted gifts, though even then with no absolute consistency. In the Genevan translation of 1557, the Job passage refers to fire that will 'devoure the houses

⁴⁰ Barclay, *Iugurth*, fos. xi'–xiii'.

⁴¹ Elyot, *Image of Governance*, fos. 27'–8'.

⁴² Marcus Tullius Ciceroes *Thre Bokes of Duties*, trans. Nicholas Grimalde (London: Richard Tottell, 1556). *An Epistle or Letter of Exhortation Written in Latyne by Marcus Tullius Cicero, to his Brother Quintus*, trans. G. G. (London: Rowland Hall, 1561).

⁴³ Cicero, *Epistle to Quintus*, sig Bii'.

⁴⁴ Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes Compared Together*, trans. Thomas North (London: Thomas Vautroullier & John Wight, 1579), 939.

⁴⁵ Noonan, *Bribes*, 316–17.

of bribes' and the sinners of Psalm 26 are explicitly named as bribers. Elsewhere Geneva sometimes prefers gifts over rewards as a more accurate translation of the process involved. By the time of the King James Version Samuel's sons are said to have sought bribes, and several other references have followed the path away from ambiguity.

These changes suggest the felt need for more precise terminology, but in their turn must have given broader currency to 'bribes' for gifts gone wrong. This would have been particularly true of the change in Psalm 26.⁴⁶ Though the liturgical version in the *Book of Common Prayer* employs Coverdale and retains gifts, the stronger language would regularly have been conveyed to Elizabethan congregations via the metrical psalms as well as through the Geneva version. Sternhold and Hopkins translate the two relevant verses as follows:

Oh shut not up my soule with them, in sinne that take their fill
Nor yet my lyfe amongst those men that seke much blood to spill
Whose hands ar heapt with craft and guile their life therof is full:
And their right hand with wrench and wile, for bribes doth pluck and pull.⁴⁷

The Old Testament God is a righteous judge, and his people are subject to detailed prescriptions about proper judicial behaviour.

It is as the biblical prophet of justice that Hugh Latimer brought the language of bribery and corruption into the Court pulpit. Latimer's sermons range broadly across the landscape of estates criticism, a process from which none of the possessioners emerge with much credit. Central to his purpose was the use of scriptural evidence with which to assail sin and corruption, and the Latin phrase *omnes diligunt munera*, served him well. Presenting himself as a latter-day version of the prophet Isaiah, Latimer in his third sermon before Edward VI spoke bluntly of the correct translation of *munera* as bribes, praising the English translation (not as we have seen wholly accurately) as giving the Latin its honest equivalent. Latimer saw the practice of *paradiasole* as having been used with varying degrees of rhetorical sophistication to avoid the moral truth of corrupt dealings. 'Now-a-days they call them [bribes] gentle rewards', they needed to be called 'by their Christian name'.⁴⁸ Bribes were the thefts of great men—princes, judges, and priests. Latimer cast his net widely, and embraced office-holders in general within his charge. Yet he returned again and again to the judges and magistrates as the prime focus of the jeremiads. In his third, fourth, and fifth Court sermons the sin of bribery was given a prominent place. Samuel was invoked as well as Isaiah; and Latimer followed his own principles by redescribing the covert gift-taking of Samuel's sons by its 'proper' name: they were 'privy bribers'.⁴⁹ There is an obvious determination in

⁴⁶ Noonan, *Bribes*, 316 makes precisely this point.

⁴⁷ *The Whole Booke of Psalmes Collected into Englysh Metre by T. Starnhold, I. Hopkins and Others* (London: John Day, 1562), 55.

⁴⁸ *The Sermons of Hugh Latimer*, ed. George Elwes Corrie (Cambridge: Parker Society, 1844), 139–40.

⁴⁹ *The Sermons of Hugh Latimer*, 189.

these sermons to seize control of language and fix its ethical meaning, to deny others the possibility of 'neighbourly' slippage. Talking of the judges in his third sermon Latimer observed:

Somewhat was given to them before, and they must needs give somewhat again: for Giffe-gaffe was a good fellow; the Giffe-gaffe led them clean from justice. "They follow gifts"⁵⁰

The doing of 'good turns' was equally condemned as a synonym for bribes in the fourth sermon.⁵¹ The fifth sermon focuses more sharply on the actual 'pitch' that would stick to the hands of bribe-taking judges or ecclesiastical patrons: the series of stories here about how bribes passed indirectly as gifts are important, and to them we must return later. The key, says Latimer, was to ensure that pitch did not stick directly: 'this is a friarly fashion, that will receive no money in their hands, but will have it upon their sleeves'.⁵²

Latimer's uncompromising stand before the court on both the language and the substance of bribery affected others. Bernard Gilpin, preaching before Edward VI in 1552, denounced men who 'seeke to climbe with bribes and bying of office' and complained that when the poor came to London as suitors to great men they could not succeed without bribing: no gifts or presents here.⁵³ Thomas Lever in his St Paul's sermons denounced competition for land and for ecclesiastical patronage, rather than the failure of justice as such, but lamented that rulers and officers alike all loved bribes.⁵⁴ In *Davie Dicars Dreame* the protagonist looks forward to a time when 'bribes helpe not to builde faires bowrs, nor giftes greate glottons feede'.⁵⁵ Thomas Becon, who we have already noted praying for judges who might take bribes, had a section on justice in his early Elizabethan catechism in which the son, responding to his father, prays 'Would God that all such bribe-takers and gift-eaters would set' God's commands before their eyes.⁵⁶

The language of moral condemnation thereafter followed a predictable pattern, and one which once again pointed most explicitly to justice. Divine judgement and its earthly counterpart interwove in the pronouncements of the preachers. Arthur Golding's 1583 translation of Calvin's sermons on Deuteronomy has him warning mortal judges not to be corrupted by bribes and money; and denouncing those who turn 'one hand unto bribes' while punishing thieves with the other.⁵⁷ Gervase Babington, expounding the 8th Commandment, condemned

⁵⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary* gives Latimer's use of this term as the first example of this: meaning give and take.

⁵¹ *Latimer Sermons*, 155.

⁵² *Latimer Sermons*, 188.

⁵³ Bernard Gilpin, *A Godly Sermon Preached in the Court at Greenwich... Anno Domini 1552* (London: Henrie Middleton for Thomas Man, 1581), 44, 46.

⁵⁴ Thomas Lever, *A Fruitfull Sermon Made in Poules Church in the Shroudes* (London: John Day & William Seres, 1550), sig cvi^r; Thomas Lever, *A Sermon Preached at Paul's Crosse the xiii Day of December* (London: John Day, 1550), sig fvii^r and v.

⁵⁵ *A Pleasante Laborinth Called Churchyardes Chance* (London, 1580), fo. 40^r.

⁵⁶ *The Works of Thomas Becon*, ed. John Ayre, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Parker Society, 1844) ii, 307.

⁵⁷ *The Sermons of M. John Calvin upon the Fifth Booke of Moses called Deuteronomie*, trans. Arthur Golding (London: Henry Middleton for John Harrison, 1583), 447, 462.

the 'acceptance of persons' in the judicial process, otherwise known as 'bribes and rewardes'.⁵⁸ William Smith, the Master of Clare College, Cambridge, had the courage to preach against abuse before James I himself. In 1609, his Court sermon, reported Carleton 'well baited' the great courtiers for bribery and corruption 'and schooled the king himself for being led by other men rather than his own judgement'.⁵⁹ And, lest we should think that Latimer's particular attack on corruption was forgotten, Thomas Pestell, preaching to the judges in the reign of James I, invoked 'old Latimer', with whom he wished to cry 'beware of covetousness'.⁶⁰

Applying the language of bribery to the practice of politics by individuals was always a dangerous business. A fallen favourite, or courtier accused of treason, might be targeted as a briber, but it was usually safest to generalize and in particular cases to use re-descriptive language. Moralists regularly complained that the world had grown to 'this passe, as to call virtue vice, and vice vertue'.⁶¹ There were, however, bold attempts at direct accusation which moved beyond generalized moral prescription and addressed issues of power. Wolsey was one of the first targets of the reformers, and in *Rede me and be nott wrothe* William Barlow showed that he could not only assail bribes in vigorous and direct style, but that he could summarize very deftly the elements that went, in his view, to make up the corruption of a great statesman. Wolsey's relationship with the French was denounced in the following terms:

For first or the warre do begynne
 They labour his favoure to wynne
 Gevyng gyftes many and divers.
 And yf it cannot be so pacified
 They brybe hym on the wother side
 At the least for to be favoured.
 And finally warre for to ceace
 With rewardes, they must hym greace
 Or els peace cannot be performed.⁶²

None of this, as we have seen, troubled Wolsey while he was in power: he was remarkably open about rewards given by the French.

Once a minister appeared likely to fall from grace it was, of course, easier to accuse him bluntly of corruption. Thus Empson, Henry VII's enforcer, was charged

⁵⁸ Gervase Babington, *A Very Fruitfull Exposition of the Commaundements* (London: Henry Middleton for T. Charde, 1583), 376–7.

⁵⁹ *Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain, 1603–24, Jacobean Letters*, ed. Maurice Lee, Jr. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1972), 110. Smith tried to make amends by offering 'a better discourse' for preaching two weeks later: HMC, *Salisbury*, xxi, 46.

⁶⁰ Pestell, *Morbus Epidemicus*, 4. For a detailed analysis of this important attack on corruption see Peck, *Court Patronage*, 168–72.

⁶¹ George Downame, *Lectures on the XV Psalme Read in the Cathedral Church of S. Paule* (London: A. Islip for C. Burbie, 1604), 281. See also Lewis Bayly, *The Practice of Piety* (London: Edward Brewster, 1695), 105, complaining that gluttony was called hospitality, simony, gratuity, etc.

⁶² William Barlow, *Rede Me and Be Nott Wrothe* (Strassburg: J. Schotte, 1528), sig. c. viii^r.

by William Cornish with eating at a table garnished with 'bryby presandys' and Richard Pate listed with exaggerated horror the failings of the fallen Cromwell and his associates as comprehending everything from murder to 'petite bribrie'.⁶³ However, flexible language sometimes survives surprisingly in the historical judgement of the sixteenth-century chroniclers. In Stow's *Annals*, Romans and the Duke of Suffolk are corrupted by bribes, but Wolsey benefits from favour and attracts from others 'presents, giftes and rewards'—the implication being that there is little covert about these offerings for favour.⁶⁴ In the 1587 edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles* the index runs together gifts and bribes, presents and rewards. It has JPs being restrained from bribery and gifts, and friendship being sold for gifts and bribes.⁶⁵

In 1621, James I sat in his Parliament in the aftermath and promised redress of the abuses of monopolies and patents and, with his customary wit, turned the language of bribes and corruption back upon his critical subjects. He expressed his pleasure that, for the first time, Prince Charles sat among the Lords. 'Because,' said the king, 'the World at this Time talks so much of Bribes, I have just Cause to fear the whole Body of this House hath bribed him [Charles] to be a good instrument for you upon all occasions.'⁶⁶ Such verbal *legerdemain* did little to redeem the concept of the bribe in the year of the attack on the monopolist Giles Mompesson, and on Lord Chancellor Bacon himself. It does, however, suggest that the king attached significance to controlling language that was dangerous to his State. James made a second contribution to this process when he airily assured the Venetian ambassador that: 'If I were to imitate the conduct of your republic and to begin to punish those who take bribes, I should soon not have a single subject left.'⁶⁷

Taming the language of corruption remained important for those who were either bribers themselves or who moved in a political world where the giving of money and other material things was a necessary part of advancement. At the end of the seventeenth century that controversial Tory, the licenser Sir Roger L'Estrange, wrote his own adaptation of the fables of Aesop and others. In his commentary on the faithful mastiff who refused bribes to betray his master's house to a gang of thieves L'Estrange attacked the acknowledgement, a sum of money given before a service was rendered, a 'present, which is only a softer name for a bribe'.⁶⁸

⁶³ Arthur Hermann Thomas and Isobel Dorothy Thornley (eds.), *The Great Chronicle of London* (London: G. W. Jones, 1938), 344–7. I owe this reference to Steven Gunn. TNA, SP1/160, fo. 165'. I owe this reference to Tracey Sowerby.

⁶⁴ John Stow, *Annales of England* (London: Ralfe Newbery, 1592), 909.

⁶⁵ Raphael Holinshed, *The Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1587 edn.), <<http://www.english.ox.ac.uk/holinshed>>, 6: 1481, 1501.

⁶⁶ *Lords' Journal*, iii, 69.

⁶⁷ Samuel Rawson Gardiner, *History of England from the Accession of James I to the Civil War, 1603–42*, 10 vols. (London: Longmans, 1883–4), iii, 74. Others followed where James led: in 1629 Viscount Dorchester sent a witty letter to Sir Philip Carteret, thanking him for his 'last barrel' but assuring him that his bribes would not cover his 'knaveries': *CSPD*, 1628–51. Endymion Porter wrote to his wife in 1632 sending 'a bribe which this Progress hathe afforded mee': TNA, SP14/122, fo. 166'.

⁶⁸ Roger L'Estrange, *The Fables of Aesop and other Eminent Mythologists*, 2 vols. (London: R. Sare et al., 1692), i, 23.

By retaining the language and form of a positive offering a spurious legitimacy was still lent to transactions of this kind.

This investigation of language points, as we would expect, to a heightened awareness of the need to be blunt about corrupt exchange, which developed markedly in the later sixteenth century. But it also suggests that, in politics and social life, if not in the law, the softer language of gifts and rewards was still applicable to both positive and negative exchanges, the context determining all. L'Estrange, like others before him, saw this as a self-interested way of avoiding spade-calling. So no doubt it often was, but the ambiguities expressed in scriptural language also indicate that the category of activity described was not necessarily seen as reprehensible. To return once more to the social life of the thing given—the circumstance is all and ethical meaning inheres in the immediate positions of the participants in the exchange. When Elizabeth I described patents and monopolies as 'private benefits' recompensing true service in her 1601 'Golden speech', her position might still be conceived as a part of the wider beneficial exchange of the political system which she and the Commons accepted.⁶⁹ The forceful attack on bribes by Richard Martin in his speech of welcome to James I on behalf of the sheriff of London and Middlesex in 1603 suggests that any complacency on this issue was misplaced. By the time Bacon and Buckingham were accused of corruption the notion of reciprocal benefits upholding order within the State had become wholly threadbare.

While preachers and moralists sought to master the slippery language condemning corrupt exchange, their auditors were more likely to be interested in that immediate positioning. When the Corporation of Leicester sought to win favour of Sir William Herrick, Master of the King's Jewels under James I, it happily offered both an initial gift supporting the request, and subsequent gifts as thanks for benefits given, and recorded the matter formally in the municipal archive.⁷⁰ This is an extension of the type of social and cultural assumptions that had presumably produced our linguistic slippage in the first place: gifts and benefits were the lifeblood of political relationships and good lordship and they were not readily relabelled as corrupt. Or at least, the parties were not disposed so to label them unless they were aggrieved when a relationship failed to produce the expected advantages. This is true even of some of the legal *causes célèbres*, especially that of Bacon. Those who came forward to testify against the Lord Chancellor did so not because of some high-minded hatred of bribery, but because they had been frustrated in their intent. One of those who testified against him, Sir George Reynell, had given Bacon £200 before his suit began, and then a diamond ring, worth in his view between £500 and £600, but had still been blocked in his suit, assuming that his opponent 'went deeper than he'.⁷¹ When Sir Thomas Throckmorton was in trouble in Star Chamber for apparently taking a bribe to protect one Lewis from a charge

⁶⁹ Sacks, 'The Countervailing of Benefits', 284–9.

⁷⁰ Catherine F. Patterson, *Urban Patronage in Early Modern England* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 162–4.

⁷¹ *Lords' Journal*, iii, 60. Noonan, *Bribes*, 349.

of accessory to murder, he did not try to deny the £800 that had changed hands, but insisted that it was part of a continuing relationship established between himself and the Welshman, who was a suitor for his daughter's hand, and over whom anyway he had no jurisdictional authority.⁷²

It would be naïve to suggest that the parties in Bacon's case, or accused as part of the attacks on Buckingham, were unaware in advance of their actions that they had crossed a recognized moral boundary. When the law was involved matters *should* have been relatively clear to all parties. Late in 1633, Exeter Assembly proposed to send a gift of plate worth £20 to Lord Keeper Coventry, probably as a New Year's gift. A month later the gift was suspended, to be proffered if need be at a later date, because a cause in which the city had an interest was about to be heard in Chancery.⁷³ Giving before and after a suit might in some circumstances be unwise, an offering made during the progress of litigation put a public body like Exeter Corporation at risk. Individuals were not always so cautious. Sir William Wentworth advised his son to give to all those involved in litigation, but to let some 'wise aged friend' guide him, since he would know 'the parties conditions and customs'.⁷⁴ He then went rather further than a prudent man might, by suggesting that to procure lawful favour and expedition from a judge he might be given 'a nag, a satin doublet, before and betime'.

As for the judges themselves, Sir Thomas More and Sir Edward Coke are routinely cited as men who would not touch a gift for fear of taint, and there are a few others whom contemporaries thought worth mention as remarkably upright. Sir John Fitzjames, who presided at More's trial, may have dismissed a servant for taking a tankard as a bribe.⁷⁵ Justice Nicolls, one of the judges of Common Pleas under James I, was said to have neither begged nor bought office, nor to have done anything by corrupt means.⁷⁶ The Privy Council, sitting in Star Chamber, did its ferocious best to represent this sort of behaviour as the standard to be expected of the queen's or king's judicial servants. In a slander case against Benjamin Rolle in 1598, in which the defendant was said to have inferred that both chief justices could be bought to reverse a murder judgement, the Lord Keeper thundered that, if the Lord Chief Justice were found guilty: 'he would draw the vengeance of God on all the land for innocent blood, he had abused the queen and her justice, for she is the body and we are the parts of the body'.⁷⁷ And, lest there should be any doubts about the fearful consequences of judicial malfeasance, their lordships twice invoked the case of the king's justice, Sir William Thorp, charged in 1350

⁷² John Hawarde, *Les Reportes del Cases in Camera Stellata, 1593 to 1609*, ed. William Paley Baildon (London: Spottiswoode & Co., 1894), 134–5.

⁷³ Patterson, *Urban Patronage*, 163.

⁷⁴ *The Wentworth Papers 1597–1628*, ed. J. P. Cooper (London: Camden Society 4th ser., 12, 1973), 17.

⁷⁵ David Lloyd, *State Worthies* (London: J. Robson, 1670), 114–18. *The Reports of Sir John Spelman*, ed. John H. Baker, 2 vols. (London: Selden Society, 93–4, 1977–8), ii, 141, but Baker doubts the veracity of the tale.

⁷⁶ *Mr Boltons Last and Learned Workes of the Foure Last Things...and Notes on Justice Nicolls his Funerall* (London: George Miller, 1632), 165–6.

⁷⁷ *Les Reportes del Cases*, 100.

with bribe-taking to pervert justice, found guilty, and only spared execution after a lengthy stay in the Tower of London.⁷⁸

CORRUPT MINISTERS AND GREEDY PATRONS?

There was, as we have seen, ample spillage between worries about judicial corruption and the questioning of political morality. The historiography on patronage, corruption, and exchange in early modern England agrees no consensus on the acceptable boundaries of political behaviour, though it acknowledges a growing chorus of anxiety from the 1590s onwards. The language addressing corruption was sharpened and criticism was more regularly aired by contemporaries: the difficulty is to establish how far there were changes in behaviour. The covert nature of improper or illegal giving makes this a particularly difficult problem.

The increasing central political control established by Tudor regimes, and the greater availability of wealth to dispense after the dissolution of the monasteries, provided rich openings for the manipulation of patronage and giving by the Crown's agents. The evidence for this first becomes really visible during the 1530s when Thomas Cromwell was the recipient of an extraordinary range of gifts, carefully recorded by his servants, in the hope that favour would be returned. The nature of a number of those gifts has already been explored: the question here is whether any should be regarded, by contemporary standards, as corrupt. Muriel St Byrne, in her edition of the *Lisle Letters*, clearly thought so, and Lawrence Stone seized on this aspect of Cromwell's behaviour.⁷⁹ In a characteristically trenchant defence of his hero Geoffrey Elton argued that the extensive evidence on the minister did not suggest that he crossed the boundary from fees to bribes, or at least did so very infrequently. The charges addressed include evidence that Cromwell extracted 'gifts' of money from several monasteries to exempt them from the conditions of the 1536 Act of Dissolution, took presents in return for favours, and demanded fees of almost all those who might wish for his goodwill. Elton distinguishes proper and improper gifts in two ways: firstly, things, rather than money, did not constitute bribes. Secondly, fees were perfectly acceptable, but additional rewards to secure favour etc. could in certain circumstances, be construed as 'less than honest'. Then, in a rather circular argument, he suggests that it was indeed gifts in kind, not cash, that sometimes sailed closest to this wind.⁸⁰ This last might be suggested by Cromwell's defence when he was charged with favouring Lord

⁷⁸ *Les Reportes del Cases*, 136, 99. John Maddicott, *Law and Lordship: Royal Justices as Retainers in Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-Century England*, *PP supplement* 4, (1978), 48–51.

⁷⁹ Muriel St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle Letters*, 6 vols. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), ii, 556–7; vi, 356. Lawrence Stone, 'Review of the Lisle Letters', in *New Republic*, 5th May, 1982. See also Roger Bigelow Merriman, *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1902).

⁸⁰ Geoffrey Rudolph Elton, 'How corrupt was Thomas Cromwell?', *HJ* 36 (1993), 905–8.

Lisle over Sir Edward Seymour in their tangled land disputes. He assured his fellow counsellors that he took no 'grete rewards or gefts . . . oneles it were a pece or ii of wyne or a dyshe of ffyssh or wylde foule'.⁸¹

Interesting though these ideas are in proposing a boundary for the acceptable political gift, Elton surely doth protest too much. We have seen that both money and things constituted acceptable gifts in early sixteenth-century culture, and Cromwell seems to have been receptive to anything that might be presented. In this he followed the precedents set by Wolsey which, at the very least, tested political loyalty by the assertion of control over all significant patronage. Some sense of the value of this control can be seen in Cromwell's accounts. In October 1537, for example, £510 came in in fees as part of total receipts of £1255.⁸² In May 1538, a quiet month, only £206 was provided in fees, but monastic and other 'gifts' totalled a further £294, when all receipts were £754. Each month's revenue also included sums transmitted by Cromwell in cash to his accountant, and even Elton admits that this could possibly have included money bribes. There is the evidence of monies left in a glove, a standard method of passing gifts covertly. The minister had very elaborate patronage networks to feed, and was peremptory in his demands that others give gifts of office etc. that he could bestow on third parties. The charges at his attainder included non-specific accusations of corruption and on the present showing they are not wholly disproven.⁸³ And, although Cromwell himself insisted on the non-monetary nature of the gift in the Lisle instance, it is one of the more striking aspects of the behaviour of Henry's ministers that they did not distinguish money offerings from material ones. There may be some differentiation in labelling—fees and rewards are more usually monetary than gifts—but all seem equally acceptable.

Though money was scarcely differentiated from other forms of material gift, it could anger the donor if it was asked for in too naked a manner.⁸⁴ When John Husee was offended by Thomas Pope's blunt demand for cash he reflected on how common this attitude was in the Henrician Court: 'friendship taketh small place when money fails'.⁸⁵ The poisonous atmosphere of the Court from the 1530s onwards offered plenty of proof of Husee's words, and of the corrosion of bribes. In one of the best-known crises Thomas Seymour, Lord Admiral and brother to Edward VI's Protector, was accused at his trial of having corrupted members of the privy chamber with 'gifts and promises' to gain access to the young king. The term 'bribe' was never used, and Seymour himself endeavoured to neutralize the language of corruption by claiming that he was passing pocket money to the king, and merely giving New Year's gifts to the grooms of the Chamber. It was, however, clear that the accusation was of both political and financial malfeasance.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Michael L. Bush, 'The Lisle-Seymour land disputes: a study in power and influence during the 1530s', *HJ* 9 (1966), 259. Cromwell here seems to be seeking to apply the same standards to the gift as the judges were required to employ—food was a suitable offering and did not constitute a bribe.

⁸² *LP*, XIV: ii, 758, pp. 320, 322. ⁸³ *TNA*, SP1/160, fo. 165r.

⁸⁴ *LP*, XIV, i, 1219. ⁸⁵ *LP*, XIV, i, 1219. ⁸⁶ *TNA*, SP10/6/27.

The structural problem was in part that the old routes to reward, local good lordship and the *cursus honorum* provided by the Church, had been wholly or partially subverted by the actions of the Crown. Clients and suitors, unable to use these traditional forms of support so fully, now had to seek new ways of articulating their claims. These are circumstances, anthropologists observe, in which bribery can readily emerge as a substitute form of pseudo-reciprocity.⁸⁷ Office-holders are distanced from those who seek benefit, rather than part of a stepped hierarchy in which those immediately superior to a client could often be persuaded of the mutual advantage of a reciprocal relationship. The great men of the realm now had to be persuaded by other means. So benefit must more often be sought with the presentation of something materially advantageous. And a fee, a gift, a bribe, might in these circumstances become interchangeable. Goody's description of the impact of bureaucracy on the Gonja of West Africa is strikingly similar to the pattern that emerges in early modern England. Traditionally men had pursued their suits by 'greeting to beg': giving gifts at the community assemblies as part of physical deference to the elders. The gift articulated the relationship of hierarchy but also of mutuality in the resolution of disputes. With a removed and impersonal bureaucracy this was no longer possible and presents became redescribed as bribes, without any fundamental change in the motives of the clients.⁸⁸

We have already seen that Latimer, Gilpin, and others seized on the combination of judicial and political malfeasance to denounce their contemporaries. Latimer had claimed specifically that men gave money for their offices: 'some of them... two hundred pounds, some five hundred pounds, some two thousand pound'.⁸⁹ It may be as a response to these 'commonwealth' pressures that Edward VI's last parliament passed an act 'Against buying and selling of offices'. This was also a politically opportune moment, since the allies of Protector Somerset—Lord Paget, Richard Whalley, Sir Thomas Holcroft, Sir John Thynne, and Sir William Arundel—were all charged with financial malfeasance after his fall.⁹⁰ By the Act, anyone bargaining to sell office or 'receyve have or take any Money, fee, reward or other profytt directly or indirectly...' would forfeit their position, and anyone offering reward etc. would be disabled from office.⁹¹ The Act seems to have had little impact, and the fact that one of its provisos exempted chief justices and the judges of assize from its provisions suggests that it was little more than a gesture by the regime to contemporary pieties. But it remained on the statute book as at least a formal reminder of the dangers of misbehaviour in the new political world.

When Sir William Cecil returned to power, at Elizabeth's accession, the question of gifts and bribes was in his sovereign's mind. When the councillors were sworn before the queen she singled out her new Secretary: 'this judgement I have of you, that you will not be corrupted with any manner of gift, and that you

⁸⁷ Eleanor Goody, '“Greeting”, “Begging” and the Presentation of Respect', in J. S. La Fontaine (ed.), *The Interpretation of Ritual: Essays in Honour of A. I. Richards* (London, 1972), 56–67.

⁸⁸ Eleanor Goody, '“Greeting”, “Begging” and the Presentation of Respect', 67.

⁸⁹ *Sermons of Latimer*, 185.

⁹⁰ Hurstfield, *The Queen's Wards*, 203–5.

⁹¹ 5 and 6 Edward VI, c.16.

will be faithful to the state⁹² And in essence Elizabeth's judgement proved correct. Cecil had the State's interests firmly at the centre of his vision, and receiving the gift as bribe of a foreign prince or an enemy of the polity, was unacceptable. Even within the realm Cecil's actions cannot be demonstrated to be posited in any significant ways upon financial or other inducements from individuals. His mastership of the Court of Wards provides the most obvious question mark over this view: Hurstfield's careful analysis confirms what knowledgeable contemporaries believed, that Cecil took unofficial gifts, and that in the probably distinctive case of eleven for which evidence survives, these amounted to just over £3000 in three years.⁹³ On the other hand Hurstfield concluded, with some hesitation, that these offerings did not fundamentally change Cecil's actions as a judge.

Cecil was certainly not alone in accepting gratuities, and accepting them in cash: they were the bedrock of political patronage throughout the Elizabethan period. Men like William Hulbert, seeking to pass on the role of customer of Bristol, or Henry Golding wanting to be comptroller of Ipswich, assumed that their requests had to be accompanied by offers of money.⁹⁴ But if such gifts were the norm, why was increasing anxiety displayed about their circulation? Burghley's biographer stressed that he had seen his master refuse 'a bucke and manie pieces of plate, at new-yeares-tide. And to offer him money was to offend him so, as they [suitors] fared the worse.'⁹⁵ The context here was judicial, and it might be thought that this was only an issue when cases were pending in the Wards, or could be influenced elsewhere. But there is other evidence of Burghley's distaste for being bound by the gift. Sir Julius Caesar, in the series of New Year's letters already discussed, treads with great care when addressing Burghley.⁹⁶ Coolness emanates from Burghley when gifts are offered in hope of return. Gratitude after the event was perhaps another story. The language with which Tobie Matthew accompanied his gift of thanks for Cecilian patronage in the acquisition of the see of Durham is carefully chosen. His £100 in gold was 'some significacion of a thankefull mynde'.⁹⁷ Thankfulness after the event could scarcely be construed as corrupt.

The Cecilian ascendancy meant that by the 1590s suitors' presents were as often directed to Robert as to his father. Robert's early dealings appear at times to have been designed to shield his father from the worst of the opprobrium associated with the doubtful manipulation of patronage. His manoeuvring in cases like that of the promotion of Sir Thomas Egerton as Attorney-General in 1592, while obscure in detail, was sufficiently embarrassing for him to urge Michael Hicks to 'burn this' at the end of a key letter.⁹⁸ On another occasion he suggested that it would be wise not to reveal the process of promotion to his father. Large sums were sometimes mentioned: Walter Hickman offered £1000 and £100 towards Lady Cecil's coach

⁹² TNA, SP 12/1, fo. 12r.

⁹³ Hurstfield, *The Queen's Wards*, 266–7, 278–81.

⁹⁴ CSPD, 1591–4, 347, 424.

⁹⁵ Peck, Francis (ed.), *Desiderata Curiosa: or, a Collection of Divers Scarce and Curious Pieces (Relating Chiefly to Matters of English History)*, 2 vols. (London: private print, 1779), i, 19.

⁹⁶ BL, Lans. MS. 157, fos. 63r, 8r.

⁹⁷ BL, Lans. MS 79, fo. 108r.

⁹⁸ Alan G. R. Smith, *Michael Hicckes: Servant of the Cecils* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1977), 74.

horses if his brother gained an office; Sir George Carew and Arthur Gorges £500 if their suit to the queen succeeded.⁹⁹ Hurstfield's view was that Robert Cecil's acquisition of the Mastership of the Wards was the culmination of some years of dubious dealings in the profits of that Court.¹⁰⁰ If the office did not meet his ambitious expectations about gifts it was not because of moral rectitude in the minister, but because, after 1599, Elizabeth tightened the rules governing the conduct of the Court, ensuring that its profits flowed more fully to the Crown.

After 1603 Cecil had reasons at least to appear to exercise restraint in the taking of gifts from suitors. The gestures of courtesy, mystifying self-interest, sometimes wore thin, as he contemplated the responsibilities of financial management after James's accession. His aversion to gifts had occasionally been noted in the 1590s: Richard Proby, for example, claimed that his 'token' had been refused, and he understood that Cecil would not take anything 'of charge' from those he most favoured.¹⁰¹ But in 1603 that assiduous giver of presents, Sir Arthur Gorges, felt he had to apologize for his New Year's gift knowing how Cecil refused to be thought pleased with presents. Gorges assured him that he would have sent more 'but that I knew your puritan humour would take offence at the shadow of a gift'.¹⁰² Cecil himself had acknowledged the tensions when he wrote to the Earl of Northumberland towards the end of 1600. Northumberland had given a coach and four horses, so great a gift that Cecil would have refused it if it had been offered in person. 'Gifts of value' ought not to be given from those of equal honour and affection; there was the danger that he would be thought mercenary; and the matter Northumberland had a suit pending before Elizabeth, so the gift could be construed as bribe. Nevertheless Cecil had accepted the gift, 'rather than discontent you' and sought to neutralize its poison by an immediate counter-gift though 'neither gold nor silver'.¹⁰³ In 1603, having assumed mastership of the Court of Wards he proceeded to insist that wardships should pass without any unofficial gifts to himself or his officials, while raising the official price so that the Crown increased its revenues.¹⁰⁴ By 1609 Chamberlain was reporting that Salisbury 'refused a world of newyears-gifts' though he still accepted a few from near friends.¹⁰⁵

All this needs to be treated, as it has been by most historians, with some cynicism. Cecil as Earl of Salisbury and Lord Treasurer had reason to stand on his moral dignity: 'I am a councillor of State, and in my private conscience opposed to all fraud' as he told Hicks in 1608.¹⁰⁶ The Earl of Newcastle's later observation was that when Cecil became Lord Treasurer, he promised James that he would not sit to receive gifts on New Year's day but 'hee always appoynded, 3 or 4 Days after to receive them'.¹⁰⁷ Cecil could even make an uneasy joke of corrupt practice:

⁹⁹ HMC, *Salisbury*, iv, 531, 569.

¹⁰⁰ Hurstfield, *The Queen's Wards*, 298–300.

¹⁰¹ HMC, *Salisbury*, ix, 8.

¹⁰² HMC, *Salisbury*, xii, 581–2.

¹⁰³ HMC, *Salisbury*, x, 347.

¹⁰⁴ Hurstfield, *The Queen's Wards*, 310–14. This policy culminated in the attempt to gain a realistic settlement for the abolition of this and other feudal dues in the 1610 Great Contract.

¹⁰⁵ *Letters of Chamberlain*, i, 280.

¹⁰⁶ BL, Lans. MS. 90, fo. 143r.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas P. Slaughter (ed.), *Ideology and Politics on the Eve of the Restoration: Newcastle's Advice to Charles II* (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 1984), 27.

telling the Earl of Shrewsbury when he was appointed to the commission of oyer and terminer that he expected a warrant for a stag or a hind as a bribe.¹⁰⁸ But he still accumulated, and lost, unrivalled wealth, and the gifts flowed almost as freely at the end of his ascendancy as in the 1590s.¹⁰⁹ Wardships were still, in practice, the subject of bribes to the master: Stone suggested in some cases exceeding the official price by a factor of ten. And the environment in which Salisbury operated was scarcely one of improved public standards: service to friends and the pursuit of the profits of office remained the essential basis for Court office. The earl's receipts include large, and possibly suspect, sums from the rich jeweller Peter Vanlore, and from several of the newly founded trading companies. Gifts from the Spanish were more than rewards for the negotiation of the 1604 Peace.¹¹⁰

All of this, however, has to be compared with the efforts of the true caterpillars of the Jacobean Court, the favourites Carr and Buckingham, and the disastrous Thomas Howard, Earl of Suffolk and Lord Treasurer. The story of the fall of the last provides a classic demonstration of gifts that were incontestably bribes.¹¹¹ Suffolk and his wife, along with Sir John Bingley, a Treasury official, were charged in 1619 with taking bribes for services rendered. Everyone who had business with the Exchequer was required to provide *douceurs*, with the voracious countess esteeming 'no friends but money'. There seems little doubt that the Suffolks were guilty as charged, though their defence, like that of Bacon a few years later, endeavoured to employ the gift register and redescribe bribes as presents. Suffolk claimed that in several cases he took money offered 'with no contract' rather as free gift, and that both plate and money given to him was often to be defined as a New Year's gift. Even the £1500 given yearly by the customs farmers could be classified as a New Year's offering, though curiously it was only payable as long as he remained Lord Treasurer.¹¹² As in the Bacon case, the judges refused to countenance this manipulation of the gift register. To call these *douceurs* gratuities, they said, 'was but to clothe a hare in a fox's skin, and that they were but cloaks lined with bribery'. By delicious irony it was Lord Chancellor Bacon who delivered the most sonorous critique in 1619: 'New Year gifts,' he pronounced, 'did not last all the year.'¹¹³

Bacon's speech also addressed the dishonour associated with the sale of privileges and benefits. The Countess of Suffolk was likened to a shopkeeper, with Bingley as her apprentice, the cash being pocketed by the earl. Lando, the Venetian ambassador, lamented that his bribes were 'but drops in the bucket' for the great, 'better calculated to whet the appetite than to satisfy it'.¹¹⁴ Since the culture of the

¹⁰⁸ HMC, *Bath*, v, 227.

¹⁰⁹ Lawrence Stone, *Family and Fortune: Studies in Aristocratic Finance in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 3–59.

¹¹⁰ Lawrence Stone, *Family and Fortune*, 24.

¹¹¹ HMC, *Salisbury*, xxii, 96–113. A detailed narrative is given in Peck, *Court Patronage*, 181–4.

¹¹² HMC, *Salisbury*, xxii, 107–8.

¹¹³ HMC, *Salisbury*, xxii, 113. This is part of a characteristically grandiloquent pronouncement by the Lord Chancellor on the State of the realm and the desirability of effective justice and financial control—words eaten a couple of years later.

¹¹⁴ *CSP Ven*, 1619–21, 546.

Jacobean Court allowed the sale of almost anything for cash, the identification of the gift with the marketplace now became routine. Earlier there does seem to have been more recognition that it was undesirable to use money as a marker to distinguish between gifts, salaries, rewards, and bribes.¹¹⁵ But to attach an explicit price to the benefit, especially if that price was in some sense agreed between the parties, was to challenge the diffused spirit of the gift, and to collapse the delayed expression of goodwill that the counter-gift embodied. There is ample evidence of the condemnation of this process in the moralizing sermons, but it is in the nature of things more difficult to detect it in actual exchange.

It may be that the transition in some New Year's gifts is the greatest help here. Money could readily be given in the royal New Year's exchanges, provided that it was part of the conventional structure of allegiance and loyalty displayed by magnates and bishops. But the idea that cash was routinely given at the festival to equals or superiors, as against servants, seems to date only from the end of the sixteenth century. Lawyers like Egerton expected large gifts; the merchant companies paid out, even if with some grudging; the customs farmers paid highly for their privileges. Royal officials came to see their 'usual New Year's gifts' simply as cash reward for services. Of course such a process was not confined to the New Year: great, if flawed, projects like that of Alderman Cokayne depended on bribing the right councillors: in this case the ubiquitous Suffolk and Robert Carr.¹¹⁶

The case against Suffolk, though the product of the characteristic factional infighting of the Jacobean Court, might be said to mark the hesitant beginning of a political crisis that made the relationship between the gift and the bribe an issue of national ideological significance. By the time of Buckingham's impeachment in 1626 parliamentarians denounced the system of corrupt gifts, and assailed the power given a royal favourite to extort them. This had a variety of effects. Peck points out that it seems to have induced a degree of guilt in some lesser men. Henry Sherfield, one of those who helped to produce the case against Buckingham, was troubled by a gift he had taken in a case heard in 1610. He was given a cup in thanks for success at law by Sir Robert Needham: in 1626 he expressed gratitude to God that he had never offended in that way again.¹¹⁷ More generally the charges against Buckingham explicitly brought together the two sides of corrupt giving that have been discussed in this chapter, judicial and political malfeasance. It was Sir Edward Coke, the harshest of those who judged the Suffolks, who had consistently argued that law, administration, and financial control could not be separated when issues of bribery and corruption were discussed. After several years of challenging royal servants who had perverted justice, favoured friends, and profited from great douceurs, the Commons concluded the soliciting and taking of rewards was a profound offence against the realm and against the king's honour. While the most explicit action proposed was directed against corruption in judges and other holders of legal office, the language of watchfulness extended throughout the

¹¹⁵ On this theme see Louis A. Montrose, "Gifts and Reasons": the Contexts of Peele's *Araygnement of Paris*, *Journal of Literary History* 47 (1980), 453.

¹¹⁶ Peck, *Court Patronage*, 152–3. ¹¹⁷ HRO, 44 M69/L25/1.

political system. In March 1628, Sir John Danvers introduced a bill in Parliament 'against the procuring of judicial places for money, or other rewards, and against giving and taking of bribes'. This built upon earlier legislation, but proposed harsh penalties: great financial penalties were to be imposed on offenders, and their actions in office declared void.¹¹⁸

The political storms of the 1620s did not result in a seismic shift in attitudes to gifts and bribes. The parliamentarians of the Rump were later to be charged with pork-barrelling on a grand scale.¹¹⁹ And in the brave new world of the Restoration, the evidence of Samuel Pepys' diaries for the early 1660s shows that the parameters within which officials could act with some impunity remained very fluid. Anti-bribery legislation had had some effect, but only when it suited the interests of the prosecutors, as it did when John Ashburnham became the first MP to be expelled from the House in 1667. That case was a part of the wider attack on the political dominance of the Earl of Clarendon. Ashburnham was particularly charged with taking money for influence from a group of merchants, £1000 of it on the old excuse of New Year's gift.¹²⁰ The charge of corruption, and its accompanying rhetoric was here, as so often, used as a justification for assailing enemies who had often done little or nothing that was not common among contemporaries.

Samuel Pepys gives us unusual insight into the 'business as usual' manner of handling dubious gifts. In the early 1660s he was steadily increasing his rewards at the naval office. Sometimes his benefits came in carefully wrapped as a gift. On 9th February 1663, Sir William Warren sent what Pepys expected would be plain gloves, but on opening were revealed to include a silver dish and cup with his arms engraved on them. At other times the exercise was blunt: in April of that year the diarist got a reward for obtaining an office for Captain Grove. There was a letter, with money in it, which was not opened until he returned home: 'there I broke it open, not looking into it till all the money was out, that I might say I saw no money in the paper if ever I should be Questioned about it'. The profit was a piece of gold and £4 in silver.¹²¹

Pepys seems poised between the knowledge of wrong-doing, with the accompanying anxiety that he would be caught, and an almost child-like delight in beating the system, and making profit. There is a ludic quality to the diarist's reception of some of his material gifts. Captain Grove sent a side of pork 'which was the oddest present, sure, that was ever made to any man' and Pepys planned righteously to decline a barrel of sturgeon sent as a bribe, suddenly remembering that he should disapprove of such gross abuse of the king's service. When Mr Falconer made a ceremonious visit of thanks to Mrs Pepys, and gave her a silver cup and cover,

¹¹⁸ *Commons' Journal* i, 874. It is ironic that Danvers was later thought to be one of the most corrupt politicians of the Rump Parliament.

¹¹⁹ Though as Blair Worden observes, it would be hard to demonstrate conclusively that the Rump was necessarily more corrupt than other seventeenth-century regimes: Blair Worden, *The Rump Parliament 1648–1653* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 93–6.

¹²⁰ Noonan, *Bribes*, 390–1.

¹²¹ Robert Latham and William Matthews (eds.), *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, 11 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970–83), iv, 39, 93.

Pepys grumbled that he would rather have parleyed this into a summer visit to Woolwich.¹²² The same levity does not usually apply to offerings of money which, if not always disguised in the manner above, often involved clean hands—the reckoning being placed on a shelf, in a purse or in gloves. This, as we have seen, is nothing new. However, it may be that the attacks on bribery before the Civil War had enhanced the sense that money was a risky offering. It could not readily be remarked, or of course displayed.

CONCLUSION TO BRIBES AND BENEFITS

The language of benefits and of corruption was sharpened by the experience of the patronage system in the early modern English State. In judicial proceedings relatively clear parameters about the acceptable and unacceptable were defined and, though giving to influence legal outcomes remained common, powerful voices such as those of Coke, and later Mathew Hale, kept the principle of judicial rectitude alive.¹²³ There were fewer checks of this kind in politics, and charges of bribery were only likely to stick in circumstances of political conflict.

The difficulty of change is perhaps best seen in a topic not considered so far, that of ecclesiastical promotion. The Church had even clearer prescriptions than the law against the abuse of gifts: in this case anything in which office was traded could be caught under the heading of simony, notionally the biblical sin of Simon Magus. When the Elizabethan regime legislated against money or other gifts being given for election to colleges, hospitals, or cathedrals, it insisted that simoniacal transactions would be declared void, and that the promotion should revert to the Crown.¹²⁴ The definition of simony could, of course, be stretched or restricted to suit the commentator. William Vaughan, in *The Golden-Grove*, extended the definition from the buying and selling of benefices to include selling the Word of God and to attack any 'Minister that denieth to bury the dead or say Divine service'.¹²⁵ Ulpian Fulwell, in his dialogue between the author and 'Sir Symon the Parson of Poll Jobbam', has his country priest defend all kind of conservative behaviour, as well as being guilty of purchasing benefices.¹²⁶ According to Gilbert Burnet, William Bedell, the distinguished Bishop of Kilmore, initially refused a benefice from the Bishop of Norwich because he thought the fees being taken by the diocesan administration amounted to simony.¹²⁷ The formal definition, however, was clear: simony was the 'corrupt presentation of anyone to an ecclesiastical benefice for money, gift or reward'.¹²⁸

¹²² Pepys, *Diary*, iv, 120; v, 45.

¹²⁴ 31 Elizabeth, c. 6.

¹²³ Alan Cromartie, 'Mathew Hale', *ODNB*.

¹²⁵ Vaughan, *The Golden-Grove Moralized*, sig. Z 7^v–8^r.

¹²⁶ Ulpian Fulwell, *The First Parte, or the Eyghth Liberall Science: Entitled, Ars Adulandi, the Arte of Flatterie with the Confutation Therof* (London: William How for Richard Jones, 1579), sig. J i^r–iv^r.

¹²⁷ Gilbert Burnet, *The Life of William Bedell, D. D., Bishop of Kilmore in Ireland* (London: John Southby, 1692), 23–5.

¹²⁸ Timothy Cunningham, *The Law of Simony: Containing all the Statutes, Cases at Large etc.* (London: Royal Law Printers, 1784), 1.

It was for the Church to address corruption in a cleric who might have purchased his benefice, and Canon 40 of the 1604 Canons records the oath that had to be taken by the clergy at admission to a living.¹²⁹ The patron of a benefice, not subject to ecclesiastical sanction, was not even incorporated in the Elizabethan legislation that applied specifically to institutions headed by the clergy. So, while a cleric who gave an explicit gift in return for a living was guilty of perjury as well as simony, the patronage system allowed endless flexibility and advantage to the presenter. The ability to purchase the right of next presentation to a living, usually from another layman who did not have a particular candidate in view, was legitimate in law and routine in practice. The gift was often designed for a relative and, since the money that changed hands was simply a lay transaction, no simony was visibly involved. There were ambiguous cases, for example when an existing incumbent resigned and was given a pension from the living, but simony remained difficult to prove.¹³⁰

Malfeasance might be difficult to prove, but there was a conviction that it was widespread. Richard Hooker blamed the patrons for this abuse of gifts: they were conscienceless and wicked 'of which sort the swarms are too great in the church of England'. He also fairly explicitly blamed the bishops, citing 'that ancient canon ... which forbiddeth a bishop to be led by human affection in bestowing the things of God'.¹³¹ In practice the system of patronage as property, and the fiscal pressures on the clergy, made it almost inevitable that any notion of ecclesiastical office as a free gift would be drowned by a cacophony of demands from suitors seeking promotion in the Church. The bishops themselves appeared particularly vulnerable to lay rapacity: it was rumoured, though probably incorrectly, that when Salisbury diocese was given to Bishop Davenant it was the only see that Buckingham did not sell during his years in power.¹³² One of Davenant's predecessors, Martin Fotherby, was clearly uncomfortable about the charge of simony: he denied fiercely doing anything other than giving gloves to friends present at his consecration.¹³³ In all of this the Church was but a mirror to the experience of gifts and bribes in secular society. Indeed, as Sir Edward Coke pointed out 'lay-simony in buying and selling all sorts of offices' derived originally from ecclesiastical simony.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Gerald Bray (ed.), *The Anglican Canons 1529-1947* (Woodbridge: Church of England Record Society, 1998), 324-5. In 1601, Maurice Gruffyn had petitioned Egerton to initiate legislation requiring patrons to take an oath as well: HHL, Ellesmere MS. 2029A.

¹³⁰ Rosemary O'Day, *The English Clergy: the Emergence and Consolidation of a Profession, 1558-1642* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1979), 106-9. Christopher Hill, *Economic Problems of the Church from Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 63-9. Hill cites one case that did come to High Commission in 1638: the right of presentation had been sold to the fellow of a Cambridge College, and he sold it on for £650.

¹³¹ Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Bk. VII, xxiv: 7-8.

¹³² Thomas Birch and Robert Folkestone Williams (eds.), *The Court and Times of King James I*, 2 vols. (London: H. Colborn, 1848), ii, 254-5. The notoriously unreliable Antony Weldon alleged that Davenant was a rare case of such gratuity, but Fincham points out that in most other cases there is no hard evidence of payment being made: Kenneth Fincham, *The Prelate as Pastor: the Episcopate of James I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 23-4.

¹³³ *Letters of Chamberlain*, ii, 157.

¹³⁴ Hill, *Economic Problems of the Church*, 52-3.

The language used to assail corruption in the Church parallels that used for the wider society. There was perhaps less room for ambiguity: in the early sixteenth century William Tyndale and John Longland had a ready-made rhetoric of simony with which to assail those 'craftie iugelers and mockers of the worde of God' who sold benefices or engaged in 'choppyng and chaungynge' livings for greater profit.¹³⁵ The fracturing of religious consensus encouraged such explicit challenges to the old Church. Later such language was a valuable weapon both in the attack on lay greed and particularly in the Puritan critique of the clerical establishment. The charge of bribery and financial malfeasance was one which was a significant embarrassment to senior clergy who were inevitably enmeshed in the patronage system. The complex circumstances mattered less than the fact that a Puritan like William Ames could report that 'every page and lackey at the Court... can tell how much this and that bishop or dean gave to such or such a Buckingham', and appear credible.¹³⁶ Since the abuse of gifts was largely covert in this, as in most, societies, it was easy to attribute wrong-doing to those whose policies or values one condemned. While promotion in Church and State waited on individual patronage there would always be corruption, and the gifts and promises associated with it would always be 'dirty'. How loudly the bribe was denounced depended in part on how far it deviated from articulated norms of behaviour, but above all on the political relationship between the critics and their targets.

¹³⁵ William Tyndale, *The Obedience of a Christen Man and How Christen Rulers Ought to Governe* (Antwerp: J. Hoochstraten, 1528), xxvii. John Longland, *A Sermonde Made Before the Kynge his Maiestye at Grenewiche, upon Good Frydaye. The Yere of our Lorde God. M. D. xxxviii* (London: Thomas Petyt, 1538), sig fii'.

¹³⁶ William Ames, *A Fresh Suit Against Human Ceremonies in God's Worship* (Amsterdam: Giles Thorp's successors, 1633), 419.

8

Conclusion

RESTORATION

The restored Court of Charles II at once displayed continuity with the past and reflected the changes in royal culture that had followed from defeat and exile. Ceremonies of power had a continued, and indeed enhanced, importance for the newly recovered monarchy and the exchange of gifts and benefits were a necessary part of such rituals. The most public revival was in the international face of the State: there could be no more powerful affirmation that the king had ‘come into his own again’ than the magnificent reception of ambassadors. Sir Charles Cotterell, assuming the duties of Master of Ceremonies, was concerned to demonstrate the continuity of kingship, as well as his monarch’s standing on the international stage, and much thought was given to resuming the formalities of the 1630s.¹ The first visit of a major ambassador extraordinary, the Prince de Ligne representing Spain, was recorded and painted.² Gifts both from and to the king were resumed in full splendour, while carefully reflecting the status of givers and receivers. Ambassadors were now most usually given jewels, rather than the somewhat old-fashioned plate.³ Charles received the usual mixture of exotica and art. The greatest gift, both in terms of value and of symbolic significance, was the collection of twenty-four paintings and twelve sculptures sent by the Dutch in 1660, and received in a special ceremony in the Banqueting Hall. The States had selected pictures designed to fill gaps left by the Commonwealth sales, and Charles made a speech both of gratitude and of assurance that he wished for a closer alliance.⁴ Other gift-bearers arrived from Russia—sables and furs, Venice—gondolas, and Morocco—lions and ostriches. The Russians demonstrated continuity with the past by leading hawks and horses in procession into the Banqueting Hall.⁵

¹ TNA, LC/5/2, is a copy of Cotterell’s book of ceremony. Anna Keay, *The Magnificent Monarch: Charles II and the Ceremonies of Power* (London: Continuum, 2008), 102–6.

² Felicien Leuridant (ed.), *Une Ambassade du Prince de Ligne en Angleterre* (Brussels: 1923).

³ These are listed and discussed in government correspondence from 1670 onwards: BL, Add. MS. 31043, fo. 105^v; Add MS. 32476, fos. 26^r, 27^r, 48^r, 49^r, 50. Cotterell was also anxious not to create precedents for increase in money values for the gifts: TNA, LC/5/2, fos. 21–3.

⁴ Jerry Brotton, *The Sale of the Late King’s Goods* (London: Pan, 2006), 335–7.

⁵ *CSP Ven, 1661–4*, 219. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys: a New and Complete Transcription*, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews, 11 vols. (London: G. Bell, 1970–83), iii, 297; *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. E. S. de Beer, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), iii, 322. The Moroccans arrived in

High ceremony of this kind was counterbalanced, at least in the early 1660s, by Charles's instincts for ease of access, more resembling his grandfather's attitudes than those of his father. Plenty of gift-givers made their way into Court at the beginning of the reign, combining affirmations of devotion with carefully calculated concern to benefit from the new regime. The East India Company was in the fore, providing 10,000 ounces of plate which their governor argued would both congratulate the monarch, compete with the Merchant Adventurers and Turkey Company, and 'much improve their interest'. The plate was predictably received with 'so fine an acceptance that they doubt not to find his majesty favour in so just things they are [engaged in]'.⁶ Charles benefited from loyal addresses, supported by material gifts, from a number of towns and gentry communities; Exeter, for example, gave plate worth £500, Leicester £300. London, aware of the need to atone for past sins, gave £10,000.⁷ These displays of traditional loyalism were overtaken by the demands of those who had suffered in the wars, and others in the usual patronage hunt—Marvell calls them the 'swarms of insects' who 'our land devour'—and Charles paid a heavy price for his policy of access.⁸

Meanwhile monarch and Court rapidly resumed the old ways of lavish expenditure, much of it spent on luxury display and gambling, with the royal mistresses consuming gifts such as jewels with a voracity that would have impressed the first Duke of Buckingham. In 1667 Pepys calculated that even Frances Stuart, who had the unusual distinction of resisting the king, had been given jewels worth about £6000.⁹ Barbara Villiers, Countess of Cleveland, famed for the prodigious sums of royal money she was gifted, appeared at one ball in 1668 'so glorious in jewells that she was the wonder of all who saw her'.¹⁰ In a courtly milieu, gifts would always remain a test of favour.¹¹ Beyond the Court, Pepys's observations on gifts and bribes suggest that political business was much as usual. Although there was some attempt to reform the administration through an attack on reversions to offices, and Parliament made occasional attempts to challenge bribe-takers, neither the Earl of Clarendon nor the Earl of Danby were embarrassed by the taking of gifts. Clarendon was said 'never... [to] do anything but for money' and Danby was probably guilty as charged that he had obtained gifts of Crown lands contrary to Acts of Parliament.¹²

1682 and, according to Resesby, were well treated because of trading advantage. They brought two lions and thirty ostriches 'which his Majesty laughed at, saying he knew nothing fitter to return for them than a flock of gheese'. Private humour did not prevent a more serious return gift of three hundred muskets: *Memoirs of Sir John Resesby*, ed. Andrew Browning, Mary K. Geiter, and W. A. Speck (London: Royal Historical Society, 1991), 245.

⁶ Quoted in Brian Weiser, *Charles II and the Politics of Access* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003), 125–6.

⁷ Brian Weiser, *Charles II and the Politics of Access*, 88, 125; Keay, *Magnificent Monarch*, 94.

⁸ *The Second Advice to a Painter*, ll. 349–50; for discussion of the context of these complaints see *The Poems of Andrew Marvell*, ed. Nigel Smith (London: Longmans, 2003), 323–5, 361–4. Keay calls this early period 'the clamour of kingship'. This well conveys a sense of the excitement and uncertainty of these first years: *Magnificent Monarch*, 93–119.

⁹ *Diary of Samuel Pepys*, viii, 183–4.

¹⁰ BL, Add. MS. 36916, fo. 119: quoted in S. M. Wynne, 'Barbara Palmer [née Villiers], countess of Castlemaine', *ODNB*.

¹¹ These issues are explored for the following century in *Gift-Giving in Eighteenth Century Courts*, ed. Andrew Morrall, *The Court Historian*, special edition 14: 2 (2009).

¹² *Diary of Samuel Pepys*, viii, 185–6; *Memoirs of Resesby*, 165–6. Mark Knights describes Danby as appearing 'the epitome of a corrupt courtier': Mark Knights, 'Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby',

Charles's old mentor, the Earl of Newcastle, had recommended to him that he should 'courte your Nobility and gentry, and discourse with them and Cale them to you'.¹³ Charles may have paid some heed to this in keeping a relatively open Court, but he was less disposed to do so by the old ceremonious means. He did not make formal progresses, except for a brief period at the beginning of the 1670s. Then he took an almost inadvertent journey to Devon and Cornwall, in 1671, followed by a planned trip to Norfolk and especially Great Yarmouth. The West Country journey started as a sailing trip to review naval resources at Portsmouth and Plymouth, but was turned to land progress by adverse winds. The local gentry scrambled to be in attendance and the Corporation of Exeter was accidentally able to present in person a golden ball designated to express gratitude for a favourable ruling about rights on the river Exe.¹⁴ Great Yarmouth was given more warning and mustered an elaborate entertainment, supported by the gift of a gold chain complete with golden herrings.¹⁵ Both journeys, in true Elizabethan style, made the king visible access to gentlemen and townsmen normally having little access to the Court. Thereafter Charles was more disposed to retreat, not only from broad geographical contact with his subjects, but also from the political drama of London. From 1674 Windsor became a key residence and centre of royal authority.¹⁶

Charles and his servants administered a more conclusive death blow to that other gift ceremony originally designed to bring together Crown and élites. The custom of New Year's gifts to and from the monarch had, as we have seen, been revived at the Restoration, when Pepys trotted to Court to organize the exchange for his patron the Earl of Sandwich. By then it was a pale shadow of the Elizabethan celebration, used mainly as a source of royal profit and of benefit for household officers. In 1660, the Treasury Commissioners began assigning monies gained by the king at New Year to individuals, including Margaret, widow of Sir Edward Herbert, one of the sufferers in royal service.¹⁷ New noble creations had, as one of the conditions of elevation, that they must pay poll tax, benevolence money, and New Year's gifts, as though each of these forms of tax was equivalent. In 1668, the other aspect of the exchange was attacked when tradesmen who served the king were excluded from the New Year's rewards.¹⁸ Finally, in 1679, no presents were any longer paid into the Jewel House, and sometime in those last years of Charles's reign the old custom ceased: all that remained was giving to immediate royal ministers and the household of service. The Jewel House officials complained about their loss of profit as late as 1701.¹⁹

ODNB. The Venetians also complained about problems of access and bribery: *CSP Ven*, 1660–1684, 177, 224.

¹³ Slaughter, Thomas P. (ed.), *Ideology and Politics on the Eve of the Restoration: Newcastle's Advice to Charles II* (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 1984), 49.

¹⁴ Weiser, *Charles II*, 99–101.

¹⁵ Perry Gauci, *Politics and Society in Great Yarmouth, 1660–1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 121–3.

¹⁶ Keay, *Magnificent Monarchy*, 180–2, 191–3.

¹⁷ *CSPD*, 1660–61, 274.

¹⁸ *Calendar of the Treasury Books*, II: i, 244.

¹⁹ *CSPD*, 1667–8, 318; *Calendar of the Treasury Books*, VII: ii, 1308; *CSPD*, 1700–1702, 474.

The political conflicts which culminated in the Exclusion Crisis reinforced the royal tendency to withdraw into a more formal Court. The politics of intimacy were more closely controlled by new household ordinances and by the development of the royal *levée* and *couchée* modelled on the French example. In one key ceremony, however, Charles moved in the opposite direction, and indeed went beyond his predecessors in using a gift to establish a relationship with those who were outside the usual circles of royal influence. The ceremony of the royal healing touch, with its promise of a cure for scrofula, was used in some measure by all early modern English monarchs.²⁰ It affirmed their sacred character and divinely appointed duty to serve their people, and could be staged as a display of grace on occasions such as progress or visits to the heart of the capital. Charles took the ceremony and elevated it to a central act of kingship. Anna Keay has calculated that around 100,000 people may have been touched during his reign, with particularly concentrated activity in the early years and in the last period of high monarchical ambition.²¹

The king's touch was a gift to the sufferers, one that was underlined by the very careful staging of a personal encounter between the patient and the king. The first presentation was of the sufferer who was touched, then a second one, in which he or she was presented with a small gold medal, or 'touch-piece' on a ribbon, placed over the head by the king to the accompaniment of a scriptural reading from John 1:1–13.²² The touch-piece was a token of royal grace, though the assumption must be that it was regarded as containing some of the thaumaturgical powers of the king himself. In a strict ideological sense the king's touch was a gift rather than a gift-exchange in that, like the gift of divine grace, the recipient in this case had no autonomous power to reciprocate. The very patience with which this most restless of monarchs pursued his duty to touch suggests that he accepted it as God-ordained. However, he was also acutely conscious of the need for popularity in difficult times, and a ceremony that could reach beyond turbulent politics was surely to be prized. The royal presence and promise of healing were exchanged for an affirmation of loyalty and acceptance of the personal power of monarchy; a relationship surely fructified whenever a patient wore her or his touch-piece.²³

CONTINUITIES AND CHANGE

Gift-exchange remained as significant in the wider society as it did in the royal Court. Everyday exchange, even in a burgeoning market economy, retained the

²⁰ Marc Bloch, *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France*, trans. J. E. Anderson (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973).

²¹ Keay, *Magnificent Monarchy*, 112–19, 184–5, 192–4.

²² *Diary of John Evelyn*, iii, 250–1.

²³ It might also impress outsiders who attended. The Moroccan ambassador, having watched, was reported to have said that he should have brought the king a greater gift, for he understood him now to be the greatest monarch in Europe, not the minor prince he had been led to suppose: quoted in Keay, *Magnificent Monarchy*, 119.

practices of gifting in the transmission of tokens of affection, and the celebration of rites of passage. Informal networks of support and charity may have been enhanced by the growth of new mechanisms of association, particularly in towns.²⁴ Above all, there were no fundamental changes in patterns of patronage and clientage, and therefore the need to use gifts to cultivate the relationships on which advancement depended. This is not, however, to suggest that there was no shift in cultural behaviour by the end of the century. There was change, both in the social environment in which giving occurred, and in the language in which contemporaries discussed beneficence.

Much of the giving discussed in the early chapters of this book had its centre in the household and a context that privileged entertainment. The great household was subject to dislocation: in the short term because of war; in the longer term because of changes in elite behaviour. War could disrupt the easy flow of local exchange: for example the Howard family of Naworth, who in the early seventeenth century were supplied with endless food gifts by their neighbours and dependents, rarely recorded more than two or three presents a year at the end of the 1640s. Accounts for the fifth Earl of Bath and his countess show a similar decline in gifts, especially after the beginning of the 1650s.²⁵ The return to earlier norms after 1660 did not necessarily ensure that the old world was revitalized. Change in social and cultural practice—the movement of the élites to London and provincial capitals, the profound alterations in architectural arrangements and domestic interiors, and the growing distance between landowners and tenants—all appeared to dispose against the open hospitality, and its accompanying gift-giving, that had characterized much of the period before the Civil War.²⁶

There were, however, countervailing responses to these new pressures. Some men set out self-consciously to restore what had been lost. John Evelyn and John Reresby, as part of their committed royalism, kept their tenant feasts intact.²⁷ Such specific political engagement was not always the incentive to generosity. Even Bulstrode Whitelocke, the grumpy former servant of the Protectorate, spent

²⁴ Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving: Informal Support and Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 334–47.

²⁵ George Ornsby (ed.), *Selections from the Household Books of Lord William Howard of Naworth* (London: Surtees Society 68, 1878); C. Roy Hudeleston (ed.), *Naworth Estate and Household Accounts, 1648–60* (London: Surtees Society 168, 1958); Todd Gray (ed.), *Devon Household Accounts, 1627–59*, 2 pts. (Exeter: Devon and Cornwall Record Society, ns 38, 1995), ii, 12–148. It seems that the records of the Newdigates of Arbury, which had much to say about gifts before the Civil War, are largely silent in this later period: Vivienne Larminie, *Wealth, Kinship and Culture: the Seventeenth-Century Newdigates of Arbury and their World* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1995), 175–92.

²⁶ This is the case that I argued in the concluding sections of my *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). This has been criticized as suggesting a 'route to modernity' and it may be that the presentation of change in that volume was too linear. But the decline of rural conviviality was more than a trope of the preachers and moralists, and, at the least, the turn to London and to civility dislocated the behaviour of the nobility and gentry. On the influence of architecture on these changes see Kimberley Skelton, 'Redefining Hospitality: the Leisured World of the 1650s English Country House', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 68: 4 (2009), 496–513.

²⁷ *Diary of John Evelyn*, iii, 393, 520; iv, 1, 265; *Memoirs of Reresby*, 285–6. Reresby described the custom as 'much lessened' by 1682.

Christmas seasons after the Restoration on his country estate, entertained there, and expected gifts.²⁸ Sir Ralph Verney maintained the giving and receiving of food gifts as a crucial cultural obligation throughout the later seventeenth century.²⁹ Lord Fitzwilliam of Milton showed what has been described as 'an obsessive concern with the disposal of venison' at the end of the seventeenth century.³⁰ Sir John Reresby's memoirs record with pride gifts of choice food and a 'wild sort of sheep' from his noble neighbours.³¹

While a certain reverence for traditional custom, as well as a particular set of 'country' values, may inform these examples, these perceptions of the proper behaviour of men of honour and worship retained vitality and influence. In some cases they extended down the social scale, though it is impossible to say how routinely they are to be found. Giles Moore, the rector of Horsted Keynes in Sussex, and Timothy Burrell, a barrister in the same county, both lovingly recorded the gifts they received in separate sections of their domestic accounts.³² These were unusually self-aware examples of the value of giving, as suggested by Burrell's solemn invocation of Homer and Seneca: the smallest gifts were to be welcomed; a gift sent back at once was almost equivalent to a repulse.³³

But one aspect of late seventeenth-century political behaviour enhanced, rather than diminished, interaction across the social order: electioneering. Treats had evolved from expressions of gratitude in the 1620s to become quite quickly, after the Restoration, an entertainment intended to influence the outcome of the election. The intrusion of national politics into the localities meant that more elections were contested, and that older methods of resolving conflicts among the gentry lost purchase.³⁴ As in the case of litigation discussed in the previous chapter, the line between gifting and bribery was easily crossed. Sometimes Parliament itself recognized this, as when Edward Backwell was unseated because of his Christmas gifts to the poor of Wendover. Feasts began to cost unheard-of sums: Edmund Verney, for example, reported that 800 dinners and equivalent amounts of sack had been provided for the Buckinghamshire election of 1679. Traditional gentlemen like Sir Ralph Verney saw no benefit in the new world, and wooed the middling sort only as far as he deemed essential, while Sir William Temple, his colleague or opponent in the Buckinghamshire elections, was willing to use new methods of persuasion to

²⁸ *The Diary of Bulstrode Whitelocke 1605–1675*, ed. Ruth Spalding (Oxford: Records of Social and Economic History, ns 13, 1990), 685, 699, 713, 763, 804. The last point can be inferred from his complaint in 1674 that no gifts were sent in.

²⁹ Susan E. Whyman, *Sociability and Power in Late-Stuart England: the Cultural Worlds of the Verneys 1660–1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 14–33.

³⁰ D. R. Hainsworth, *Stewards, Lords and People: the Estate Steward and his World in Later Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 250.

³¹ *Memoirs of Reresby*, 189, 230.

³² For detail on Moore see Ben-Amos, *Culture of Giving*, 209–13; *The Journal of Giles Moore*, ed. Ruth Bird (Cambridge: Sussex Record Society 68, 1971), 312–36. 'Extracts from the Journal and Account Book of Timothy Burrell', ed. R. W. Blencowe, *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 3 (1850), 117–72.

³³ Seneca, *De beneficiis*, IV: xl, 5.

³⁴ Mark A. Kishlansky, *Parliamentary Selection: Social and Political Choice in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 193–5.



Fig. C.1 The Stamford Punch Bowl.

© Stamford Corporation.

every advantage.³⁵ By the next generation this had transmuted in Buckinghamshire into the deep divisions between Whigs and Tories.

There was little of any spirit of the gift in this: yet it could secure a species of mutually satisfactory instrumental exchange between the middling sort, especially in the boroughs, and the nobility and gentry. The towns acquired their town halls and civic amenities from their newly engaged patrons, and the nobility and gentry their assurance of control. Sir John Reresby was regularly called upon by the cutlers of Hallamshire, and by the corporation of Sheffield to defend their interests in London, and was ritually thanked with invitations to their feasts.³⁶ The punch-bowl that Charles Bertie gave Stamford (see Figure C.1), after twice representing the borough in 1678 and 1685, sums this up from his perspective: he 'gives and appoints this cup freely and with good will... in which the citizens of Stamford may celebrate first their fidelity towards the most serene kings of Great Britain, then their friendship to the house of Bertie'.³⁷

Competition for seats in the Commons, and the consequent need to be generous to corporations, shows one way in which the traditions of giving morphed in

³⁵ Whyman, *Sociability and Power*, 153–7.

³⁶ *Memoirs of Reresby*, 119, 125, 186, 270.

³⁷ Translated and illustrated in Clive Holmes, *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire* (Lincoln: History of Lincolnshire Committee, 1980), at 80. I am grateful for the use of this translation.

the later seventeenth century. In contexts other than those of electoral patronage it is the language of giving that is most accessible and interesting. Courtesy literature had always insisted on the importance of proper forms of address, and we have seen examples of this operating in patron—client relations. Now civility was the quality most required of men of standing—an affability and ease with all, which in theory accorded well with the increasing fluidity of the social order.³⁸ Obadiah Walker was one of a number of Restoration writers who saw the need to guide gentlemen, especially in their youth, to a proper understanding of good behaviour.³⁹ His fear was that many of his contemporaries understood civility as ‘modish and particular ceremonies and fashions in clothes, gesture, mine, speech or the like’. Changes in manners might be a part of refashioning a gentleman, but the key was the display of sentiment, ‘being ready to do all good offices and ordinary kindness for another’.⁴⁰ Such ordinary kindness was, of course, to be manifest in external gestures. As William Ramesey put it, the gentleman should clearly demonstrate that he was ‘grateful for as well small as great favours, gifts and obligations’.⁴¹

Walker spent much of his text on advice that we might justifiably label Machiavellian, including ways to manage personal relationships between client and patron. These should be marked by proper acknowledgement of rank, interest, and by displays of gratitude: ‘Every man is more apt to love... and trust in him on whom he hath already bestowed most courtesies... wherefore if you seek the favour of a great person, accept courtesies from him and not from others.’⁴² Even if, like Samuel Johnson much later, clients felt that their benefactor was ‘commonly a wretch who supports with insolence and is paid with flattery’, neither the political nor the social system could be liberated from his or her grip.⁴³ Patronage was an inseparable part of the *ancien régime*, and its obligations and benefits continued to be central to its social structure. This may serve to explain why Senecan moral values still had purchase in the post-Restoration polity. Sir Roger L’Estrange, Charles II’s censor, and an extraordinarily prolific writer, made considerable impact with his abstract of Seneca’s *De beneficiis*, first published as *Seneca’s Morals* in 1678 and running through seven editions before the turn of the century.⁴⁴ L’Estrange’s abstract was designed as a commonplacings of the original, focusing on gratitude and ingratitude. These were ‘a lecture calculated for the unthankfulness of these times’.⁴⁵ His

³⁸ Peter Burke, ‘A Civil Tongue: Language and Politeness in Early Modern Europe’, in Peter Burke, Brian Harrison, and Paul Slack (eds.), *Civil Histories: Essays Presented to Sir Keith Thomas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 31–48.

³⁹ Obadiah Walker, *Of Education* (Oxford: At the Theater, 1673); Edward Panton, *Speculum Iuventutis: or, a True Mirror, Where the Errors in Breeding Noble and Generous Youth...are...Manifest* (London: Charles Smith & Thomas Burrell, 1671); Edward Waterhouse, *The Gentleman’s Monitor* (London: T. R. for R. Royston, 1665).

⁴⁰ Walker, *Of Education*, 211–12.

⁴¹ William Ramesey, *The Gentleman’s Companion: or a Character of True Nobility* (London: T. M. for Thomas Sawbridge, 1672), 66–8.

⁴² Walker, *Of Education*, 250.

⁴³ Johnson included this comment in the first edition of, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, then cut it in the abridged 3rd edn., only to restore it in that of 1773.

⁴⁴ Roger L’Estrange, *Seneca’s Morals by Way of Abstract* (London: Henry Brome, 1678 1st edn.).

⁴⁵ Roger L’Estrange, *Seneca’s Morals by Way of Abstract*, sig A4^v.

introduction concentrated upon the political ingratitude of Charles's enemies, there being no separation in his view between social codes and political ethics. The point was made even more explicitly by Swift in *Gulliver's Travels*: the Lilliputians see ingratitude as a capital offence for 'whosoever makes ill returns to his Benefactor, must needs be an enemy to the rest of Mankind'.⁴⁶

L'Estrange and Swift were both convinced that ingratitude, and the failure to circulate benefits properly, was a fundamental threat to social stability. Civility could only be an effective regulator of behaviour if it was allied to a proper understanding of political order. Johnson might despise individual patronage relationships, but he also gave voice to practical justification for adhering to the existing structure of authority: 'I am fond of subordination as conducive to the happiness of society: there is a reciprocal pleasure in governing and being governed.'⁴⁷ While patronage remained the way of securing that reciprocity, gifts continued to be accepted as performing important roles in the English polity. But half a century after Johnson much had changed. Informal support and reciprocal generosity still sustained much of the social practice of nineteenth-century England: in political and social theory, however, gifts had vanished. Or rather, they were remarked only to be condemned as corrupt practice, or rejected as belonging to status-orientated systems that had been overtaken by impersonal bureaucratic power and the economy of possessive individualism. Gift-exchange was associated with other, less advanced, cultures: the India of princes; primitive peoples encountered in this century of great European expansion.⁴⁸

Hobbes, and Adam Smith in the next century, had already foretold the decline of the old system of reciprocities with their insistence that self-interest must be pursued by contract, or by impersonal economic action. Hobbes, as we have seen, separated the voluntarism of the charitable gift from the contractual surrender of freedom necessary to establish a sovereign. Smith often wrote as though the market was sufficient for the complete management of exchange. Yet both remained conscious of the old world of mutual support. The very fact that Hobbes invoked four of his 'laws of nature' or 'theorems' to express these forms of mutuality, suggests their continued influence upon him. His fourth law is a version of Seneca: 'a man which receiveth Benefit from another of meer Grace, [should] Endeavour that he which giveth it, have no reasonable cause to repent him of his good will'.⁴⁹ Smith, as the author of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, as well as *The Wealth of Nations*, acknowledged the significance of the concepts of status and regard, and valorized

⁴⁶ Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, ed. Claude Rawson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 54.

⁴⁷ James Boswell, *Life of Doctor Johnson*, ed. George B. Hill, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1934), i, 408.

⁴⁸ The disappearance of the gift in European political thinking is explored in Harry Liebersohn, *The Return of the Gift: European History of a Global Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁴⁹ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London: Andrew Crooke, 1651), pt. 1, ch. 15.

the forms of exchange which upheld them. Existing political hierarchies ensured a stability of which he continued to approve.⁵⁰

Utilitarian thought was largely indifferent to this understanding of the importance of the gift and the forms of reciprocal bonding that it had helped to sustain. Only a century later, in the aftermath of the First World War, did Mauss bring the gift back to mainstream European intellectual debate. He did so, of course, with the eyes of an anthropologist exposed to fundamentally different forms of social organization and examining a global phenomenon. But he also saw the gift as embodying a spirit and potential force opposed to the anomie of modern economic and political systems. In his concluding chapter he recognized that the practice of European societies had never succumbed fully to possessive individualism: informal networks of support and exchange were still alive, and could be revitalized in the face of political breakdown. The study of the gift might become the means by which reciprocal relationships could be shown to constitute 'the common life, whose conscious direction is the supreme art... politics in the Socratic sense of the word'.⁵¹

THE CROWN AND GIFTS

Such a totalizing theory of political, moral, and economic behaviour was alien to those who circulated benefits in early modern England. Their actions were perceived as normative, providing economic and social advantage for individuals and families, supplementing the direct activities of the market, and expressing affect and loyalty. The gift was also expected to affirm the social order, hence the explicit pattern of giving presents across hierarchical boundaries: tenants to lords, clients to patrons, monarchs to great subjects, and in each case the reverse as well. At the apex of the early modern English polity the Crown used its gifts as a means of expressing authority, securing loyalty, and displaying majesty. Competition and communication with other sovereigns was mediated through gift-giving when conflict could be avoided. While the precise content of gift-exchange was subject to much variation over the period, this might seem the product more of individual choice than of any fundamental shift in behaviour.

Conclusions of this kind, however, do not do full justice to the ebb and flow of concerns about giving in this culture. The gift register was always liable to be fraught, and to be open to forms of subversion. The circulation of benefits

⁵⁰ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 50–4. Avner Offer, 'Between the Gift and the Market: the Economy of Regard', *Economic History Review* 50: 3 (1997), 451–2.

⁵¹ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: the Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 81. In his *Stone Age Economics*, Marshall Sahlins suggests some interesting comparisons between Hobbes and Mauss, especially their disposition to find some power—the sovereign, the *hau* or spirit of the gift, that could constrain men to rational political and social behaviour to one another: Marshall Sahlins, 'The Spirit of the Gift', from *Stone Age Economics*, in ed. Alan D. Schrift, *The Logic of the Gift* (London: Routledge, 1997), 83–95.

depended on agreed understanding of what was normative, and on a specific trust that parties would seek the agreed outcome. Gifts could so easily go wrong, and turn, as Thomas Elyot had suggested, to poison.⁵² Covert manipulation of the gift register through bribery was always a concern, but it is striking that the vice of which writers constantly complained in this period is that of ingratitude. When Crown patronage was limited, as in the 1590s, or monopolized by favourites, as in the second half of James's reign, the chorus of criticism intensified. Even when the conditions of exchange were less fraught, anxieties about ingratitude were often aired. Montaigne's observation, 'I find nothing so costly as that which is given me, for then my will is mortgaged by a title of gratitude', certainly found many resonances among Englishmen.⁵³ While a bribe, even if skilfully disguised under more appealing language, might be refused with honour, the true gift obliged both to acceptance and to deferred return. The formalities of giving at seasons and times eased the uncertainty of giving without fully erasing it. The centralization of political patronage and the enlargement of the political nation meanwhile made exchange more complex. Still the need to participate in the distribution of reward focused upon the monarchy, led inexorably back to gift and gratitude.

This book has dwelt upon the practical, often hard-edged nature, of gift-exchange in early modern England, and the perils of the gift in an intensely competitive society. But the positive power of the idea of giving and receiving is also present in the language of political exchange. Nowhere was it used to more effect than by Elizabeth I in her 'Golden speech' to the parliament of 1601. Elizabeth accepted the Speaker's assurance that 'your coming is to present thanks unto us, which I accept with no less joy than your loves can desire to offer such a present'. Her response was to assure them 'there is no prince that loveth his subjects better, or whose love can countervail our love'. The jewel of their love (a characteristically Elizabeth thought) was greater than that of any earthly treasure: 'For I do more esteem it than any treasure or riches, for that we know how to prize. But love and thanks I count unvaluable.'⁵⁴

⁵² Thomas Elyot, *Of the Knowledge Which Maketh a Wise Man*, ed. Edwin Johnston Howard, (Oxford: Anchor Press, 1946), 5.

⁵³ Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, trans. Michael A. Screech (London: Penguin, 1987), 1095.

⁵⁴ *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, ed. Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 337.

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